Leo Strauss

Aristotle's *Politics*

A course offered in the Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

Spring 1960

Table of Contents

Editorial Headnote	xvii
Session 1: Introduction: Why Aristotle?	1
Session 2: (unrecorded; no transcript available)	21
Session 3: The household and the *polis*; acquisition (book 1)	22
Session 4: Plato's *Republic* (book 2)	42
Session 5: Property; Phaleus and Hippodamus; constitution vs. laws (book 2)	63
Session 6: The citizen; the *polis* as association	86
Session 7: The *polis* and the regime (book 3)	108
Session 8: Natural right; the kinds of regimes (book 4)	127
Session 9: Preservation of regimes; Laws (book 4)	150
Session 10: The best regime (book 4, chapter 4)	179
Session 11: Regime change, revolution (book 5)	201
Session 12: Regime change continued; tyranny; *politeia* (book 5)	225
Session 13: Regime change: democracy and oligarchy (book 5)	250
Session 14: Regime change and Plato's *Republic*; monarchy (book 5)	275
Session 15: Slavery; the best regime: aristocracy; the happiness of the individual and of the *polis* (book 7)	302
Session 16: How the city should be built; character of the best regime and its citizens (book 7)	329
Session 17: Education, leisure (book 7)	354

Editorial Headnote

This course was taught in seminar farm. Strauss began class with general remarks; a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The text assigned for this course was Ernest Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). When the text was read aloud in class, this transcript records the words as read by the student reader, whose deviations from the text are noted in footnotes. Original spelling from Barker's translation has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

The course had seventeen class sessions, and audio recordings for all but session 2 have survived. The transcript is based almost entirely upon a transcript prepared from the remastered audiofiles; in a few cases a small portion of the transcript has been taken from the original transcript (made by persons unknown to us) and this is indicated in a footnote. The editors' deletions are noted in endnotes, additions in square brackets.

Due to a stubborn formatting quirk, in the PDF version of the transcript the endnotes for sessions 1-9 appear at the end of session 9; the endnotes for sessions 10 and 11 appear at the end of session 11; other endnotes appear at the end of their relevant session. In the digital collection version of the transcript, the endnotes appear in their appropriate place in the text itself.

This transcript was edited by Christopher Lynch and Kathryn Sensen, with assistance from Matthew Breuer, Jeanne Sullivan, Emmanuel Junior Atobrah, Clara Picker and Austin Walker.
Kathryn Sensen is a lecturer in the Department of Chemical Engineering at MIT. Christopher Lynch is head of the Department of Political Science and Philosophy at Missouri State University. He has published on Strauss's writings about Aristotelian political science, classical exotericism, and liberal education, and is the author of *Machiavelli on War* (Cornell, 2023).

Aristotle's *Politics*

Session 1: March 29, 1960
Introduction: Why Aristotle? (book 1)

Leo Strauss: This class is to be a seminar, and this means that we will have a paper at the beginning of each meeting, apart from today's meeting. That means fifteen meetings, and there is a convenient way of dividing Aristotle's *Politics* into fifteen parts, as I know from former experience. Book 8 will be one part; otherwise, each book will be divided into two parts. But I don't plan to divide the papers today because today no one knows which is which—I mean who is registered and who is not. But I look around for one acquaintance of mine, Mr. Schrock. Mr. Schrock, could you read a paper next time? [Laughter] Now I would suggest that you take the section on slavery, from the beginning until slavery is included: first book. That is not too long. You should have sufficient time to prepare it for next Thursday. All right. The other papers will be divided next time, and by that time you are requested to think a bit about the question [of] what paper you would like to read.

Now I call this course, which is devoted to Aristotle's *Politics*—I might say something else: I suggest that we use the translation by Ernest Barker, Oxford [University Press], of which there is now available an inexpensive paperbound edition. That's the most convenient edition and translation available and we well could use it. I call this course an introduction to political science, by which I wanted to say that I do not plan to regard Aristotle's teaching as a historical subject. Now to treat Aristotle's *Politics* as a historical subject is a rather common procedure and we have to explain why I deviate from it, but in order to do so I must first indicate the reasons why Aristotle's *Politics* is treated as a historical subject or, rather, what does it mean to treat it as a historical subject? In the first place, to treat such a work as a historical subject means to treat it as belonging to *the past*; and the second indication, which is more interesting, means the teaching is not *true*, because otherwise you do not treat it as a historical subject. But if this is so, if we assume from the outset that Aristotle's teaching belongs to the past and is therefore not true, why should we study it at all?

Now there are indeed quite a few political scientists who say we should not [study it] for this very reason: they wouldn't say Aristotle is an old fogey, at least not in writing, but that is what they substantially mean. The right thing is scientific social science as now practiced, and this social science as they mean it I think can be described as a mixture of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons on the one hand, and Freud and Karl Marx on the other. Marx less [so] now, but still somehow. But the point is this: we cannot assume without a long argument that this scientific social science is the correct approach to the understanding of social reality, as the men holding this view themselves admit and even emphasize. Social science as it is now understood is a product of a very long development. It is the mature approach to social reality, which as the mature approach was of course preceded by immature approaches. The mature approach of present-day social science presupposes the experience of the failure of the earlier approaches. Now we today who enter college or graduate school in the 1950's or 60's[1] no longer[2] [have] that

experience, because the old approaches no longer exist. But we presuppose the experience of the failure of these old approaches, and what we imply is, if I may use a proverbial expression, that George did it. George made that experience, and we know now that this doesn't work anymore and we don't have to go through the experience vicariously. Yet to leave it at this is unbecoming to scientists or to scholars. We cannot leave it at hearsay that someone tells us: Oh, that was taken care of in the past. And now among the representatives of the immature approach—I'm speaking using the language of the social scientists—of this early approach which failed, the most outstanding admittedly is Aristotle. Aristotle controlled the study of social reality for a longer time than any other man, in its greatest effect: a great effect on . . . classical antiquity, and a still greater effect in the Middle Ages and even in the early modern times. Around 1640 someone who knew, who was competent to judge,[3] named Thomas Hobbes, said Aristotle is—I forgot the exact wording but it was how he controls the university,[i] and it was around 1640, so it's not so far away.

Now if this is so, if we have to know at least the essential character of the immature approach to social reality in order properly to appreciate the mature approach, the historical concern with Aristotle, for example, is in fact a part of the philosophic or scientific concern, and is not something outside of it. The concern with, for example, Aristotle is a philosophic reflection without which all scientific work is strictly speaking blind. We use these tools but we do not truly know why we use them, because we do not truly know why the alternative is impossible. I think I already make this clear. I have to proceed . . . Of course someone could say: Why Aristotle? Granted that Aristotle had this much more powerful effect than any other earlier social thinker, but similar considerations apply to the other great figures. After all, Aristotle was not the only one: there was once a man called Machiavelli; there was Locke, and so many, many others whose names and works you have heard of and may even have read. But this leads only to a minor modification of my earlier proposal. We have to study not only Aristotle but we have to study what is called the history of political thought or political philosophy as a whole, and that this is a perfectly legitimate and respectable proposal, I believe every one of you will admit who puts any faith in the announcement of catalogues by political science departments. Such a course is given in many political science departments. Yet the whole of political philosophy—now a whole is something which has a beginning and which has an end. Naturally it has an end, because now political philosophy has disappeared; we have now only mature social science. That's clear. The question is the beginning. Where is the beginning? Again, that is controversial among people who worry about these matters, but one can still say with great plausibility that this beginning can be definitely located in place and in time, and there is an old saying of Cicero according to which the first man who brought science or philosophy down from heaven to earth and introduced it into the cities and houses of men—cities, political science; houses, economics—was Socrates.[ii] Therefore that is still the best proposal which anyone can make: that the beginning is Socrates and the end is today. But that is not enough: a whole must also have a middle, not only a beginning and end; and if the middle of this whole should be of any interest or of any sophistication higher than that of a one-celled animal, then there will be a division within the middle. What I'm implying is the division of the history of political philosophy into periods,

---

[i] In his discussion of sense, Hobbes writes: "But the Philosophy-schooles, through all the Universities of Christendome, grounded upon certain Texts of Aristotle, teach another doctrine . . ." *Leviathan*, chapter 1.
[ii] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.4.

that we must have some notion of that in such a preliminary consideration as we are now engaged in.

Now do you understand my thought up to this point? We cannot leave it at Aristotle. We have to study the history of political philosophy as a whole. This history must have an end. That is easy. It has a beginning, that's fairly easy. But what about the middle? The middle must have—it's likely to have some articulation, that is, the division of the history of political philosophy into periods. Now that is a very controversial thing, much more than the beginning and the end.

According to one famous historian, Carlyle—not Thomas Carlyle, but somehow a relative of his . . . he wrote a six or seven volume history of political thought[iii] which is used by almost everyone. The whole history of political philosophy consists of three parts. First, the beginning: so that's Plato and Aristotle, and that was a time of the Greek city-state. And then we get something new with the emergence of Alexander the Great; the city-state becomes unimportant. The empire—and of course Alexander's empire was only a foreshadowing of the Roman empire, and there the men who started that are said to be the Stoics. There was a school called the Stoa from a place in Athens, and the Stoics are the men who belong to that school. Now these men, the Stoics, are said to be the men who developed a new kind of political doctrine according to which the central theme of political philosophy was the natural law that began with, I had almost said with Alexander the Great but one should say with the Stoics to follow this doctrine and that lasted until the French Revolution inclusively, after which there began something very new, which Carlyle, being a somewhat old-fashioned Englishman doesn't call scientific social science, but he would probably say a historical approach began to predominate in the nineteenth century and our age.

Another classification is the one which is the most simple-minded one and, well, we all know that history is divided into three parts, ancient, medieval and modern, and the same applies to the history of thought and therefore in particular to the history of political thought. There are perhaps other ways in which one can find one's bearings in this complicated story, but this mere variety of opinions shows that we are in need of a criterion which is not arbitrary, which is objective. Now there is only one way in which one can find an objective criterion, and that is paradoxically at first glance subjective. I mean, what did the people who were best informed think about the period? What did the political thinkers, the great political thinkers, themselves say[iv] —period of political thought starts with the Stoics. We go a step further, then: we turn to the late Middle Ages. We must—it is difficult to distinguish there, but it is important [to distinguish] between the political theologians, as we can say, and the political philosophers. Now sometimes that may be in one individual. For example, Thomas Aquinas has both [a] philosophic teaching regarding politics and a theological teaching. But there are some cases also where the two things are separated. Now in the Middle Ages the philosophers, political philosophers, they are all of them Aristotelians; that is, they did not have the feeling that there was some new element introduced within political philosophy itself.

[iii] R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* (New York: Putnam, 1903).
[iv] There was a break in the tape at this point.

But then we move on. We find a moment where people say: All this teaching, starting from Socrates and culminating in antiquity in the teaching of the Stoics, is fundamentally wrong. We are in need of an entirely new teaching, and I (X [or] Y), am the one to supply it for the first time. Now the man who said this with the loudest voice, the clearest voice, was Thomas Hobbes. But Hobbes was not the first; Machiavelli had made the same claim with a slightly more subdued voice before. And therefore we come, are then driven to the conclusion that a fundamental change, a radical change occurred only once,[4] in the sixteenth-seventeenth century at the beginning of the modern times. And if this happens to agree with the most common view according to which there is ancient, medieval, and modern, at least to that extent there is a difference between ancient, medieval and modern that cannot be helped. One must not always try to be iconoclastic; from time to time one should agree with simple and common opinions.

Now from this point of view, the primary task for our orientation in this field would be to understand the meaning of this fundamental change from classical thought to modern thought. At the end of the seventeenth century, this issue became a very popular issue and it was called at that time the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns. Those of you who have only read Swift and nothing else, Swift's *Battle of the Books*—or perhaps Gulliver, but then Gulliver is a bit more complicated—would know that this was the issue at the time. Who are better, the ancients or the moderns? And Swift of course, being a paradoxical fellow in every respect, says the ancients. But we must not forget this literary controversy, because if we are chiefly concerned with whether the modern literature was as good as or better than the ancients, that was a kind of rear-guard fight of no great interest. The big battle was of course that between the modern physics—Newton—which was won a generation before, but before this great victory of modern physical science through Newton there was already a fight regarding human thought as a whole and in particular, political thought, and the greatest . . . in that fight on the modern side were Machiavelli and Hobbes.

Now we must try to understand this issue, and in order to do that I will begin with something that is most accessible to every one of you. And I will tell you why I proceed in this way in which no factual knowledge of any kind in this field is presupposed, because I have been told that there may be college students in this class and so I do not have the usual expectations one has of graduate students, and if the graduate students think I talk down to them, I apologize. I do not plan to talk down, I only don't want to have them enjoy an unfair advantage compared with the younger students who may be here.

Now in order to prepare to get the first inkling of what this issue is between the ancients and the moderns I proceed in the following way. I compare two comparable things in the ancient version and in the present-day version, and that is the division of philosophy. The division of philosophy. And I take as a representative of the older view, Aristotle . . . Now Aristotle's division of philosophy [LS writes on the blackboard.]—philosophy consists of two parts. One he calls theoretical, and the other he calls practical. And this theoretical part is subdivided into three: mathematics, physics (which means the whole natural science), and the third he calls—or not he, but that is called metaphysics. He calls it first philosophy, but that doesn't make any difference. Practical philosophy is divided into three parts: ethics, economics and politics. [LS continues to write on the blackboard.] And then there is an additional seventh discipline which doesn't belong to either part but is a kind of preamble or prelude to the whole, and that is called logic.

Now let us compare that with the present situation. One thing is striking. Aristotle does not make a distinction between philosophy and science, whereas we today take this distinction between philosophy and science for granted, and that shows itself within political science. We make a distinction between political philosophy and political science, whereas according to the earlier usage political philosophy is the same as political science: there is no difference. Now what does this mean? You see here, if you look at this list, you see that there are at least four sciences out of these seven which are today clearly subsumed under science in contradistinction to philosophy: mathematics, physics, economics and politics. Metaphysics and ethics would still be regarded as philosophic disciplines; I'll come to that later.

Now what does this mean? There was at all times—and Aristotle of course admitted it—there were certain intellectual pursuits which were not philosophic. Take the activity of a shoemaker. The activity of a shoemaker according to Aristotle is not simply manual labor; that is an intellectual pursuit. You have to know what you do. It is not as if you were to carry logs where you don't have to—you know, you must have the proper arms and legs and so, but you don't have to think about it, at least not very much. But the shoemaker must know what he does. He must know his materials and so. So there are always let us say, nonphilosophic, sub-philosophic, intellectual pursuits, and quite a few people would also have said mathematics is such a thing, and the sciences connected with mathematics, like acoustics, or music rather, and so on. The only interesting case and the decisive case is that of physics. Up to 1650—one can even say up to Newton, generally speaking—physics was of such a kind that you had to have a metaphysical commitment in order to be a physicist. Now what do I mean by that? Physics was either Aristotelian physics, or Platonist physics, or Epicurean physics, or Stoic physics, or what have you. There was not in existence a metaphysically neutral physics. This is a work of modern times, the emergence of metaphysically neutral sciences. Present-day physics, present-day chemistry, biology or what have you is so that everyone has to accept them, just as the art of the shoemaker. You may think about God and the world what you please but here you have to accept it. The establishment of metaphysically neutral sciences is the most striking thing which has happened in modern times, and the crucial thing was physics, but a consequence of that was also that you get gradually an economics and a political science which are, rightly understood, metaphysically neutral. That means in this sense, in this context, ethically neutral. But this is only an aftermath of the great event in the eighteenth century, the emergence of this new—let me call them that way—metaphysically neutral sciences.

I give now only an enumeration of the most important facts which show the issue. You see also from here if you compare this with [the] present-day situation that the distinction between theoretical and practical sciences has disappeared. We do have a distinction which reminds of it: that is a distinction between theoretical and applied sciences, but that is an entirely different distinction because applied sciences presuppose theoretical sciences. You cannot have physics applied in engineering, for example, without a previously purely theoretical physics. The Aristotelian distinction means that these practical sciences are fundamentally practical. They do not have essentially a theoretical foundation; they are of an entirely different kind. A third point which I also mention as a brute fact for the time being is that logic, which was not a part—which for Aristotle was not a part of philosophy or science but a mere prelude to it, is now taken of course, as a part of philosophy like all other parts.

I come now to the last point I think I should mention now, and that is this. We have in modern times—and that is now predominant, dogmatic—a distinction between philosophy and science along the lines indicated. Now how the sciences are divided you all know and you can see from any announcement in any of the lecture courses, the general division at any rate. I will concentrate on the division of philosophy. And here I will begin. They are so stingy[v] . . . [Laughter] Now let me see. I will just give an enumeration of the parts of philosophy which are now generally admitted, not universally. Of course logic, with which they frequently put together methodology, epistemology, and this kind of thing; then ethics is clearly a subject matter of treatment, and then they have another discipline called aesthetics. Then you have philosophy, political philosophy, which is also sometimes called philosophy of the state; and then you have philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of language, perhaps. But one thing is controversial, and therefore its presence in the list is not necessary, and that is metaphysics. There are quite a few people who say metaphysics is impossible, and so on.

Now if you would now look at this whole list you would see there is one thing, there is one common formula. I will illustrate it by the last example, philosophy of religion. Religion is, to speak in a somewhat old-fashioned way, the human attitude toward God. There is then a part of philosophy which deals with the human attitude or attitudes toward God. There is no philosophic discipline dealing with God. That would be metaphysics, and that is excluded as a hypothesis, a modern hypothesis, but present-day hypothesis in many schools. So it is not God but the human attitude toward God. Now let us generalize from that. All these parts of philosophy deal with man. They deal with man differently than the sciences of man, like the social sciences, like linguistics and all that, but they deal nevertheless with man. Look at a few famous book titles of modern philosophy. Locke: his great philosophic work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Berkeley: *Principles of Human Knowledge*. Hume: *A Treatise on Human Nature*. Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*, which are all human faculties. They all deal with man, whereas the older books, in ancient times, had entirely different titles, and these titles correspond of course to the subject matter. They dealt—I mean, a typical title in the ancient time prior to Socrates was *On Nature*, *the* philosophic—. In the Middle Ages the subject was much more theological, or you can also say metaphysical, but man was not the guiding theme of philosophy. In our age, and that age dates back some centuries, the guiding theme of philosophy has become man. The philosophy, we can say, has become "humanistic", as distinguished from cosmological, or theological. There is a connection between this most interesting phenomenon, and perhaps still more interesting which I mentioned first, namely, the emergence of modern physics, of the metaphysically neutral physics.

For what is the outcome of the emergence of the modern physics? I mean, that was not yet the view of Newton but it gradually became the view of physics about itself. Physics, the science of the universe, has the character of a human construct, naturally not an arbitrary construct—there are certain devices by which we distinguish between better and worse constructs, experiments and such things, but fundamentally there is a human construct. By this very fact the starting point, the center of the modern physics, proves to be man, the human mind. One can also say

[v] Strauss comments on the shortage of chalk for writing on the blackboard.

this. Further, it has been stated that in premodern times the emphasis in the expression "natural science" was on nature. In our times, the emphasis in that expression is on science, [on] method, on procedure, on forms of proof, and so on rather than on the subject matter itself. So there is a connection between this change in the meaning of philosophy and the more basic change, the emergence of what I call metaphysically neutral sciences.

Now this is only meant here only as one illustration, and I believe [one] good enough for the beginning illustration of the fact that a fundamental change in human orientation has occurred, and the change which we can very well identify historically as a transition from premodern to modern thought. Now I come back—I will give you an opportunity to raise your objections and so on in a very short moment, but let me only finish one point. Now I said my concern was not with the historical subject. The historical reflections are only secondary, by which I implied—although out of a justifiable cowardice, I didn't say at the beginning—I implied that Aristotle's approach is the sound approach, and that is what I meant. And we must—of course, that is an absolutely paradoxical assertion and I beg you to be as resistant to that proposition as you can. But I would like now to say something more simple. The hypothesis that the Aristotelian understanding of social matters is fundamentally superior to our present-day understanding is necessary as a heuristic device. That I believe one can prove as follows.

We are perfectly open to the possibility that Aristotle was wrong, and maybe wholly wrong, but we cannot *know* this, we cannot know that his teaching was wrong if we do not know first what his teaching was. That seems to be absolutely necessary. Otherwise you talk about perhaps a figment of your imagination, or a figment of the imagination of a historian, and not about Aristotle. We have first to know what Aristotle himself taught, and that must however be understood more precisely. It means to understand his teaching on his terms. You have to understand his teaching as he meant it, because if you rewrite it from the beginning in other terms, say, modern terms, then you have killed his teaching and then you can easily prove that this corpse is not comparable to this highly alive social science, present-day social science. Is that clear? For example,[5] if you translate a word which Aristotle uses from time to time, and rather frequently, which is in English transcription *polis*—if you translate that by city-state, as I believe even Barker does and surely many other people do, you impute to Aristotle a doctrine of the state, and you cannot speak of the state without implying that state is something different from society. Today you cannot use the word state unless you imply that, and then you get into very great troubles because Aristotle doesn't make that distinction. And then you say in advance: Well, I proved that he is wrong. I know that in advance, because I know by something approaching divine revelation—I mean, what I have been told since my childhood—that there is a distinction between society and state. Aristotle doesn't make that distinction; hence he's wrong.

So we have to understand him as he understood it, in his own terms. But that means a bit more. It means [that] if we want to understand him in the good intention of refuting him and of showing him up as an old fogey, we have first to understand him as he meant it. We must take his teaching seriously. Otherwise you will not even be able to understand an essay by Ann Landers.[vi]

[vi] Ann Landers was the fictional name of an American advice columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The extremely popular column ran from 1942-2002 (written by Ruth Crowley from 1943-55, and by Eppie

[Laughter] If you do not listen to Ann Landers while you read it—I admit the effort required is not very great; it is much smaller than with Aristotle, but you have to listen. It means, in other words, to give him the benefit of the doubt. Say perhaps he is right—perhaps. Only in this way can you understand him. It means, to say it differently and so that you see it is not entirely trivial, what I say, although it ought to be trivial: We want to study his doctrine. Since we want to do that we cannot be interested at all in any explanation of the doctrine in nondoctrinal terms. For example, assuming that a psychological, maybe even a psychoanalytic explanation—we may find out something of Aristotle, about Aristotle's relation to his nurse when he was a baby and say: Here we catch it. Or we may find out something about his social position, his class relation, and you know this kind of thing, and say: That's the key. That is absolutely impossible, to proceed in this way, because all these explanations presuppose something which must be true, namely, that Aristotle is wrong. If Aristotle is right, who cares for these conditions of his thinking? These conditions are absolutely ambiguous: they are the conditions that may be helpful for understanding the truth and they may be hindrances to the truth. This crucial ambiguity is of course denied by every psychological or sociological explanation as such.

Once you know that Aristotle was wrong either in general or in the particular, then it becomes necessary to ask or to raise the question: What could induce such a great mind to commit such a strange error which no child would commit today? And then we may perhaps find such reasons. But that can only arrive in the second stage, and a stage which, I believe, is no longer of interest to us as political scientists, because we are looking for a good framework for understanding political things. Does Aristotle supply it? We must see. If Aristotle does not supply it, throw him out. These are rational and sensible procedures, but the explanations are of no interest for our purpose at all.

I did not mention the fact why one should consider at all such an outlandish proposition; I mean that Aristotle might supply us with a framework. This is of course connected with the question, namely, do we have such a framework now? If we have a satisfactory framework for the understanding of social phenomena now, why then it would of course be a waste of time to study Aristotle with any intensity, but that is a question to which I will turn later. Now before I turn to that subject and say a bit about it, I would like to know whether there is any point where I have made too many jumps and should proceed more slowly and more step-by-step, in your opinion.

Student: What is the paperback edition that we are supposed to buy? [Laughter]

LS: No, no. That is a perfectly legitimate question. That is also Oxford Press, Oxford University Press; and that you get—there are bookstores. Do you also want to get directions to the bookstores? There you can probably get it. There are two editions. There is one which contains only the text of Barker's translation and the other contains also his introduction. I would advise you to buy the one with the introduction, because Barker's introduction contains quite a few things which are valuable which I will not take up in class, but which would be quite helpful to read. Yes?

Lederer from 1955-2002). The column was syndicated, and Ann Landers became a household name throughout the United States.

Student: What did you mean when you said that modern physics is based upon a human construct?

LS: Yes. Well, what about such things? I mean, is this not what you are told by those who reflect on physics itself? I mean, the simple physicist may not bother about that—all theorizing, all theories are not simply generalizations from experiments or experiences but are projects made by the physicist, projected by the physicist, and have their character—in other words, what is a hypothesis? What is a hypothesis? There was a time when a certain simple empiricism prevailed, you know, according to which all doctrines are merely the generalized formula for empirical observations. The only thing are the facts, that is, the substance, and the theory is simply derivative from the facts. Now this is today generally rejected. The facts which scientist studies are relevant facts, relevant for his purpose. The criterion of relevance is not given by the fact as fact; that is given by the purpose of the whole science, by its interest, and that means that that is the inevitable "subjective element." Yes?

Student: If premodern science is nature-centered . . . How would you place the sophists?

LS: The same: nature-centered, derivatively man. Derivatively man. I cannot go—I mean, that is a very long question. I mean the sophists are a very difficult subject. We know hardly anything of them except what Plato and Aristotle tell us about them. We must never forget that, but—so we turn to Plato. There is a Platonic dialogue which presents the sophistic position in the most comprehensive way. Its name is *Theaetetus*. [LS writes on the blackboard.][vii] In this dialogue Plato presents the famous thesis of the sophist Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things. That is what you think of, I believe. But that is a derivative from a certain cosmological thesis that everything is in flux; you know, that there is nothing but motion or process. It's a derivative from that, from the basic thesis. Perhaps we come to that at a later occasion when we come to Aristotle's mentions [6]of sophists. Yes?

Student: I believe one of these statements was that . . . the fact that . . . merely practical, for Aristotle, he[7] has no theoretical foundation . . .

LS: Essentially none. Yes?

Same Student: Do you think that's the Aristotelian position?

LS: Yes, well, it was as all statements, I have to make this connection somewhat overstated, but I said that, yes.

Same Student: Because in the *Metaphysics* and some other places he seems—does not really try to divide this sharply, and I wonder if this is sort of a modern look [at Aristotle], a Kantian look?

[vii] Strauss again comments on the lack of chalk or apparently on the small size of it, saying, "Do you see it? Do you see it? Oh here!" [Great laughter]

LS: Yes, that would be fatal, but I think it is not and I will prove it to you as follows. Aristotle makes a distinction between the wise man and the man of practical wisdom. Now the latter word, practical wise man, is translated into Latin and therefore also into English by prudent. But prudent does not mean he is a smooth operator; it has a moral connotation. So now let me use it[8] to speak of the difference between the wise man and the prudent man. The wise man is not a prudent man, and vice versa. So the wise man is not as such able to conduct his affairs or the affairs of his city. Not even his affairs, because there is a famous story of a wise man who contemplated the whole and fell into a ditch, so little was he able to take . . . The prudent man, on the other hand—the highest form is a statesman—is not a wise man. He knows practically nothing of the stars except what every child knows, not more. So prudence is the highest form of practical understanding. Prudence is autonomous: Aristotle's *Ethics*, sixth book. Then there arises a difficulty, a complication, and that is what you have in mind. Men cannot help having opinions about the whole, which is the theme of theoretical science. I mean, even the most primitive tribes have such opinions . . . science for them; there may also be scientists of various degrees of development. Now there are opinions about the whole, theoretical opinions, which are harmful to prudence, which are destructive of prudence as far as they go. And prudence cannot defend itself against that enemy; therefore prudence is in need of a wise defender of the whole realm of prudence. Is this clear? To that extent, and that is indeed what Aristotle claims, that his philosophy, or something like his philosophy we can say, is indispensable if there is to be prudent handling of human affairs. In other words, if the universe had a mechanistic structure and people believed that, this would inevitably lead to a false handling of human affairs, individually and collectively. [9]So one can put it this way: *de jure*, as of right, prudence is autonomous. But *de facto*, in fact, prudence is always in need of a defender, of a philosophic defense of prudence.

But take a case today. Marxism would be an example from Aristotle's point of view of a false theoretical view which is bound to have a fatal effect for the prudent handling of political matters by those who believe in Marxism. And therefore it is necessary for the defense of prudent political action that theoretical men refute Marxism. Do you see? But you must not underestimate however the first part of the statement, that fundamentally man is so equipped by nature that he would develop prudence on the various levels, from the very simple level of a father of a household to the level of broad statesmanship. He has all the materials there, but there is something which enters and deflects false theories. That, I think, is what Aristotle means.

Same Student: The other side of the statement you mentioned, is that wisdom . . . would know all things but we . . . and this would be prudent . . .

LS: It is not so simple. You see, I can also show it another way. The premise, I mean the fundamental of the practical sciences is ethics. Ethics deals chiefly, you can say, with the virtues. Now how does Aristotle get this knowledge of the virtues? If you were right, the knowledge of the virtues would be derivative from a preceding theoretical science: say, metaphysics, say, psychology, whatever it is. That is not the case. That is a new beginning. He begins with the virtues, and no attempt is made by Aristotle to derive them from a higher theoretical tract.

Same Student: This is what I meant, really, there should not be that separation because . . .

LS: That may be the deplorable defect of Aristotle, that he did that, but in fact he did it. Perhaps that is a point where we have to criticize him. Perhaps he had good reasons for this seemingly unelegant procedure, irrelevant procedure. That we must see. But there is a difficulty here; you are perfectly right. But you must not underestimate that part of the picture which I emphasize. Yes?

Student: I have one question about political science. Would you say it's possible for a modern political scientist, and I use the word scientist advisedly, not to be ethically neutral and yet to use quantitative methods?

LS: Well, no one in his senses would have anything against quantitative methods where they are manifestly required by the subject matter. For example, if you want to find out the proportion of poor and rich, to use old-fashioned language, in the society, how can you find out except by counting? I mean, counting both the noses and the property, and the various kinds of property, and figure out how you can assess the monetary value of nonmonetary property such as fields, houses, and so on. Sure. The question is only if someone tells us that any statement in nonquantitative terms is inadmissible in science, then he makes an unwarranted assertion. You know that's clear, yes? Sure. No, there is no question whatever. Now, but I will turn to the question of political science in particular very soon, as a matter of fact as soon as I am certain that no one among you would like to raise another question regarding my previous statement.

Student: I'd just like to say that it seems to me that this division—therefore I would draw the conclusion from what we've agreed on that the division between political philosophy and political science is not an absolute or rigid one in terms of at least a fair number of political scientists today who seem to be interested in both.

LS: Ya, sure. Well, you see these people are in my opinion wiser than the fanatics who throw out political philosophy altogether. But they are also a public menace [laughter], because the other fellows—you know, the young Turks, the radicals who say political philosophy is bunk—allow us to see the problem more clearly than these people who are wiser and therefore say political science is fine, political philosophy is fine, but don't help us very much in clarifying the relation between the two. You know? I suggested some time ago, precisely for these peaceful reasons, public relations, I suggested that we should make a distinction between political knowledge and political philosophy or political science. Political knowledge is something which is absolutely unproblematic for all practical purposes. I mean, that is something which every one of you and even every man or woman in the state possesses to some extent. You know? I mean, everyone knows that there are laws, for example, which are clearly political phenomena, and that there are elections, and that there are parties and so on. And some people know quite a bit about that without any political science. Now this can be had in a very, how shall I say? You can "systematize" the political knowledge available at a given time into a body of knowledge and you can write a textbook on comparative government or on public administration, whatever it may be, and that is okay but that doesn't raise the problem. The problem comes in only when this is linked up—here you have a simple transition in this case, only a difference of degree between so-called commonsense knowledge of political phenomena and academic knowledge, but when you speak of scientific political science today, you mean a break, you imply there is a break between commonsense knowledge and scientific knowledge. In practical terms, it could look like

this: in the first case, quantitative knowledge of course is implied in every political knowledge—in every political knowledge; and another one which says only quantitative statements are admissible in science, which is an extreme position.

Same Student: I agree with everything you said; all I would say is that however much they may obscure from the standpoint of analyzing their foundations, the wise men that you were talking about, who obscure the differences, and however much they may try to disguise in their own work a real tension between problems of political philosophy and the foundations of political science, I would say that this kind of dilemma, this personally may be unavoidable and very likely could be absolutely more fruitful precisely because they do obscure the differences, because there is a conflict and a tension built into their thought.

LS: Yes, sure, that is a very wise remark of you, and I fully agree with you. But you must also admit that there must be some individuals who take up these issues which are left in a comfortable darkness by these wise gentlemen. Would you admit that?

Student: Oh, sure.

LS: All right. In other words, that is a reasonable division of labor; that doesn't raise any question of principle. Now the real problem, however, on which I must touch in this initial meeting is the implication of what I have said all this time, namely, that I do not plan to treat Aristotle historically but I plan to treat him with the assumption that we may have to learn something very important from him, things which we do not learn from merely contemporary political science. That's another distinction which I address to you, in particular. I mean, in our present-day political science there is now of course a variety of strata: not everything is 1960. And in the various disciplines, for example, public law is a much older discipline in our present set up than in the other disciplines. It's much more old fashioned in its subject, except those who look, who are too much concerned with the psychology of the Supreme Court justices rather than with their juridical logic. There is this modern tendency, but public law is of course infinitely old. And so there are many strata, you know, many strata, and one cannot reduce it to a simple formula. That is, the people who try to do that are those scientific political scientists who would like to have all parts of political science treated in this particular "scientific" way.

So in other words, every sane or normal political scientist would admit, even today, that there are certain things which Aristotle has seen which are true. That I think one can say. But I say a bit more about it: I say that his overall approach is sound. I do not say that every individual statement is scripture. Now one cannot say that without being aware of the fact that this assertion encounters a very great obstacle in the certainty that Aristotle's teaching is fundamentally wrong, in the prejudice against Aristotle. This prejudice can be expressed simply by two propositions: (a) Aristotle's teaching is unscientific. I mean, those of you who have had any training in social science at the college level must have come across that opinion.[10] That is an academic prejudice against Aristotle. But [b], there is a nonacademic prejudice against Aristotle, and that says Aristotle is undemocratic and therefore nothing to boast about. But I will try to take up these two prejudices if I can in today's meeting.

First, the academic prejudice against Aristotle or the difference between Aristotle and present-day scientific social science. Aristotle's view of the situation is, as I have indicated before: political philosophy is identical with political science. The study of parties in a given commonwealth does not belong to a different discipline than the question of what they call the ideal state. The same discipline must be concerned with both. Now this one and the same discipline contains within itself what is now called economics, sociology, social psychology, theory of education, principles of jurisprudence, and what have you. Today we have instead of that a mere coordination of various behavioral sciences: sociology, political science, history, economics and so on. But they form some unity; otherwise we couldn't speak of the social sciences. These various behavioral sciences are united by one of them as the fundamental social science; and that is controversial, which it is: some say sociology, others say psychology.[viii] —this man does, but he looks in the same direction. Now what can it be? If this is the locus of the citizen and these are social phenomena, here, Aristotle says that he looks deeper into that center. The position of the modern social scientist is radically different. Not here; here. [LS writes on the blackboard.] He looks from the outside as a spectator, as an observer, as a contemplator, as a theoretical man . . . all these terms, at the whole thing, at the whole social reality including the citizen's perspective. The citizen's perspective is for him an object of research as much as, say, the economic resources. He treats this as one of the possible subjects of political or social science, whereas Aristotle uses or exercises this perspective, if one can use that expression; he does not look at it, except accidentally. That is only another side of the phenomenon which you know perhaps better, that the scientific social scientist who is up to date conceives of social science as not evaluating. The evaluating is done by the citizens or by the statesmen, whoever they may be. The social scientist does not evaluate. For Aristotle, the social scientist is necessarily evaluating, essentially evaluating.

In other words, Aristotle was a rather theoretical man. He did not run for elective or appointive office, and he did not give political advice to Alexander the Great, as far as we know—or when he gave one it was turned down by this practicing statesman. And there may be a present-day political scientist who is terribly active politically, obviously, but that is not with which I am concerned. I am concerned now with the approach to social phenomena he has while being a social scientist and not while being engaged, as it may happen, in political activity. I hope that is clear. In Aristotle, the approach he has in his capacity as an analyst of political phenomena, not as a politically active man, in this analysis his perspective is identical in principle with that of the citizen or statesman. An external consequence, but which is very illuminating, is this: we will read the *Politics* and we will not find any technical term, hardly any technical term, in the whole book. All the terms used by Aristotle which deal with [or] refer to political or social phenomena are all called "commonsense terms," terms used by citizens on the marketplace or by counsellors in cabinets of kings, or what have you, whereas it is of the essence of present-day social science to abound with technical terms. Now, that these technical terms are fed back into the market and then very innocent people use them, maybe even in election speeches and so on, I know. But that doesn't do away with the fact that they originate in the schools, in the academies, whereas for Aristotle just the opposite is true. The terminology is of marketplace origin and is clarified to some extent in its academic use, but it is fundamentally the same.

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

The third point which I would like to mention is this. Modern social science as it is now understood conceives of itself as essentially dependent on natural science, whereas Aristotelian social science is relatively independent of natural science. Now that is a difficult question. We got a sketch of it before in our discussion, and let me first develop this point. How does it come? From which point of view can we understand it? Now Aristotle's political science starts from a premise which he develops to some extent at the beginning of his *Politics*, that there is an essential difference between men and brutes, an essential difference. Man has a certain character or characteristic which no brute possesses. Everything is involved in that little proposition. Now when we speak today of natural science, we mean thereby in the first place the science dealing with the subhuman, animate or inanimate. What Aristotle implies is that our understanding of the subhuman, animate or inanimate, is of very limited use for the understanding of what is characteristically human; and political life, surely, is characteristically human. When we speak of political matters we presuppose, in ordinary language, the essential difference between men and brutes as a matter of course. If I may use an example which I may have used once too often: when President Roosevelt spoke of the Four Freedoms[ix] and mentioned among them the freedom from want everywhere, what did he mean? Did he mean freedom from want for all tigers, rats, skunks? No, of course only for human beings. Sure. So lions, tigers, rats, simply don't count in this country; we take that for granted. And Aristotle would say we take it rightly for granted because there is an essential difference between men and brutes, and we cannot—it doesn't make sense to speak of the rights of brutes in the same way in which one can speak of the rights of men. Now science: this crucial presupposition of our present-day social science is based on a premise which is today obscured by a great sophistication, but this science understands, it says basically [that] to understand something means to understand its genesis, to understand its coming into being. Therefore the essentially human, or what we ordinarily understand by the essentially human, is not understood if it is understood as essentially human. It is understood only if it is understood as having come into being, and that means of course as having come into being out of the nonhuman. Only by the reduction of the human to the nonhuman, to the subhuman, do we understand the human.

In other words, speaking commonsensically, scientific understanding is essentially according to this modern notion, at least, to understand the higher in the light of the lower. Now if you take these two schools which have exercised such a very great influence on social science, Marx and Freud, you see that almost immediately. That is an attempt to understand the higher in the light of the lower. Now the whole Aristotelian project implies that man is higher than the brutes and that that which distinguishes man from the brutes, if he takes it in its purity, isolated, is *the* end of man: the purpose, the goal of man. In other words, what Aristotle says is [that] man of course also has many things in common with the brutes, naturally: eating, digestion, propagation and such. Man has many purposes, many ends, but there is an order of these; and the highest place among the ends is occupied by that end which is purely human, which transcends the bestial. This one specifically human end is the one thing needful, if we can use this New Testament expression, and hence it is the one overarching end. Now since there is a variety of ends, there is

[ix] The Four Freedoms speech refers to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's State of the Union address of January 6, 1941. In it, Roosevelt expressed the view that all people had a right to the four freedoms enjoyed by Americans: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and freedom from want and freedom from fear.

in principle a variety of practical sciences dealing with the procurement of these ends. But there must be an order of these sciences, and at the top of the order we find that practical science which is dedicated to the highest end; therefore the hierarchic order of the social sciences with political science or political philosophy at the top.

Now in order to illustrate again here the difference, the radical difference between Aristotle and present-day political science, there is of course, as I mentioned before, the so-called fact–value distinction. No distinction between good and bad ends, between natural and unnatural ends, however you call it, between higher and lower ends, is scientifically possible. Now this is an inevitable consequence once you take as your model the science of inanimate things as it was developed in modern times, especially physics, because there the question of ends cannot possibly arise and does not arise. But, in other words, that is not a discovery of a methodological or other genius. It was in the cards from the very beginning that a social science modelled on physics would be as value-free as physics. The interesting question is why it took such a long time until it became accepted; and you know it did not become accepted, this distinction, until about thirty or forty years ago. It emerges about seventy years ago, but very slowly and not in this country, and it is only [since] about thirty years [ago] that it has become such a generally accepted doctrine. But this much only in an illustrative way regarding the fundamental difference between Aristotle's political science and present-day political science. Now let us see whether there are some points which need further discussion; I mean, which are felt to need further discussion today. They need further discussion at every point. Yes?

Student: You mentioned Freud and Marx as examples of the use of evaluating the higher through the lower, but it seems there are ends explicit in these two.

LS: Absolutely. And you know Marx wrote, conceived his notion of social science, we can call it that, around 1848, as you know, and Freud conceived it around 1905 or so. These [men], methodologically they are old fogeys. This, the value-free social science does not stem from Marx or Freud—I mean, not that they did not have some influence on that, but they were . . . that comes from an entirely different point. I can tell you the story, the main story. It's very simple: it emerged under the influence of Nietzsche. Nietzsche himself was not a value-free social scientist, but somehow a part of his teaching led to that. And now I come to thoughts which I learned from Arnold Brecht's *Political Theory*,[x] a book of about six hundred pages which has the great merit of giving a straightforward history of this distinction—you know, the fact–value distinction—and it seems that the first man who made it in the context of social science [LS writes on the blackboard] was Georg Simmel, a German sociologist.[xi] Some of his works have been translated into English; 1892, that's the first one. But the man who really trumpeted it in the world and made it famous and so that all people who still evaluate it have the feeling that they lack intellectual probity, that was not Simmel: that was Max Weber,[xii] whose works were

[x] Arnold Brecht, *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).
[xi] Simmel began to explore questions of value in his early works; see his *Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie* (1892) and *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft* (1892).
[xii] See for instance Weber's essay "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), as well as his essay

translated into English in the ’20’s, if I remember well. Weber was the one, the first to start it, and now it is absolutely in control in the Western world, this view. And there are various different versions of that. Prior to Max Weber, if you want to speak of that, prior to Max Weber’s influence I think the greatest power in the Anglo-Saxon world was a kind of modified utilitarianism; I mean the people who spoke of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. You must have heard that; and you must have heard of people who spoke of progress and of underdeveloped countries (have you ever heard that expression?)—which are all value judgments—and who spoke of prosperity and long life and such things as desirable things.

Did you know that there were once such fogeys who had a great influence on social science? That all existed, but in the last thirty years that has disappeared and is permitted only on the margins, or when these same people take political action, but as social scientists you can’t do this. That’s a long history, and it’s really difficult to understand what this value-free social science means, but it is undeniably today the accepted methodology. By accepted, I mean generally accepted. And surely, you are very right, Marx and Freud are evaluating all the time, but they are nevertheless subtle—in other words, the understanding of the higher in terms of the lower does not as such mean value-free, but it is a part of it, part of this development. Now someone wanted to say something? Mr. Sachs?

Student: . . . how one can understand anything, including social power, except if you look at the social phenomenon itself . . . make it an object . . .

LS: Yes, sure. The same is done by Aristotle, but Aristotle would say you don’t have to think of very high and sophisticated things. For example, one possible object, I mean, out of the realm of possible objects. Now let me give you an example: a horse, everyday object. When you look at a horse with the eyes of a hunter, and on the other hand with the eyes of a farmer, one can rightly say these are points of view extraneous to the horse. The evaluations which the hunter or the farmer puts on the horse are extraneous to the horse. Can one say that? Good. But what about the chair? If you take—I mean, if you look at a chair as at a horse, but here you look at the chair, and one form to find out about the chair is of course to try to sit on it, because chairs are made for sitting on, not for looking at them. Now you try to sit on it and then you fall down, and then you say it is a broken chair. You can even, if you want to use very high-falutin’ words, you can say it is a valueless chair or simply a worthless chair. Then you don’t say something which is not pertinent to this chair here. As a chair, it as it were pretends to be a thing on which you can sit, and it disappoints that legitimate expectation. That is as much a part of the story as to say it is brown or it has a circumference of so and so many inches and whatnot. That you could say. In other words, object is a very vast thing. There are such objects and there are such objects. And the objects of the practical sciences, that is what Aristotle contends, not only chairs, that is a very limited thing—I mean making of chairs. The more important things are of course the political things. But all these things essentially belonging to human action—essentially belonging, the horse does not essentially belong, only accidentally—can be used by man; [these things]

“‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy,” in *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward Shils and Henry Finch (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949). Both essays (along with many others of relevance) are found in Weber’s *Gesammelte Aufsätze sur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922). And see Strauss’s discussion of Weber in *Natural Right and History* (1950), 36-78.

belonging essentially to human action are essentially *for* something and must be judged accordingly. I mean, if a man gave a description of broken chairs, for example, or broken cars—you know, these collections of broken cars you see in certain razed areas around the city and so forth—someone can make this an object of contemplation, as the heavenly bodies—there are some painters who try to do this kind of thing. You know? But they mean something different; the painters always try to convey a message which has no longer so much to do with the broken cars as with what broken cars and such an assembly of broken cars could mean to men, which is a different story. But it is not the proper attitude to them; the proper attitude to them is to throw them out and to think perhaps, of their disposal. It may be a deliberative disposal, but that is not in itself a theoretical object. Mr. Cohen?

Student: When you say you view Aristotle as a true theorist, and you say you think there may be proof . . . What considerations do you bring in to this thought of yours . . . That is, one thing I have in mind: do you bring in certain practical considerations as to the consequences . . .

LS: You ask many things. Surely I have given that some thought, and I could perhaps give a lecture on the subject. But let me repeat one thing which I stated, I think, relatively elaborately, and that is this. We may assume that present-day social science is basically sound. We are still under an obligation to understand it, to understand the whole project, not this and that particular hypothesis. This cannot be done if we do not understand the alternative, because the alternative and the experienced failure of the alternative enters into the very fabric of present-day social science. Number one. Number two (and that I did not elaborate in any way, I mean, I did not even say a word about it, I believe), is that maybe this predominant project of scientific social science suffers from very great defects and therefore we should look around for an alternative, and the most prudent procedure would be an alternative which was sufficiently elaborated so that we can see what promises, if any, it holds out, and that Aristotle would be the natural for that purpose because of the comprehensive character of his teaching. But I didn't go into that today.

Student: From what you just said, I'm thinking of a part of the reason is to find a complement for the defects in the present-day . . .

LS: Yes, but you see, as I indicated in my conversation with this gentleman—I forget your name at the moment.

Student: Greenstone.

LS: My difficulty is this. That is a good prudential procedure, to say, Let us get in some fresh blood from some other source. But in theoretical matters, that obfuscates clarity. I think it is really theoretically necessary, *if* the foundations of present-day social science are unsound, to look for other foundations and try to integrate the tolerably good things which were developed on the new basis into an Aristotelian framework rather than the other way around. That is theoretically more satisfactory.

Student: In this theoretical consideration of Aristotle's teaching, is the question of the political teaching a theoretical question only, or must you then consider also the practical—

LS: What do you mean? I believe I understand what you mean, but I would like to find out whether it's true. How do you mean that?

Student: When we consider Aristotle as a political theorist, and when we consider the question whether or not as a political theorist he may give a true or correct political teaching, how do we evaluate the truth or correctness of his political teachings?

LS: I see, whether the theory corresponds to the facts . . .

Student: When we consider this correspondence, we necessarily then take into account the consequences of the teaching.

LS: You mean the consequences for what?

Student: That's another question, whether the consequences of the teaching are beneficial or harmful. For example, take Marx.

LS: Sure, naturally. In other words, if one could show that Aristotle's teaching, political teaching, is excellent for producing crooks and very bad for producing nice people, then I think that should prove that it's wrong, because a political theory is meant to be, to do good to man.

Student: I doubt if you could show anything so specific as that, but— [Laughter]

LS: Well, I'm surprised that you are not in the political science department [great laughter], otherwise you would say that Aristotle didn't have an inkling of the atomic age. All our problems are problems of the atomic age. What can a fellow who lived in an economy of scarcity, in a predominantly agricultural and even rather primitively agricultural world, what can he teach us? That is an objection which is frequently made, and I don't believe that Aristotle gives us any recipes for how to deal with the Eastern bloc,[xiii] for example, or with the farm problem in this country. Surely not. But the question is—I mean, I didn't speak of political theory; I spoke of political science. But if you would be wanting to use that distinction for a moment, then we would perhaps say this. From the fact that there have taken place incredible changes, changes of which Aristotle did not have any inkling, it does not yet necessarily follow that the *principles* are wrong. Maybe, if I may again use somewhat loose language, maybe the *spirit* for handling our situation is as the spirit the same in which every situation should be handled. Or to say it more theoretically, every political situation, however unprecedented, has something in common with all political situations. Aristotle's political situation, the situation with which he was familiar, had one thing surely in common with our political situation, and that was that it was a political situation, meaning by that that [it] was a situation of a man who had a certain understanding, for example, of the division of power both within the city or state and internationally, and of the intentions of the various cities, and their proclivities and whatnot. And now I come to the crucial point: and we are absolutely unable to *predict* in the decisive respect. And that is the same situation in which we still are.

[xiii] Communist states in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

Now if we are unable to predict in the decisive respect, think of this very simple thing: the future of the human race will depend considerably on whether there will be thermonuclear wars or not. No one can make a prediction on this absolutely crucial point. No one. One can say [it is] unlikely, sure; but everyone who thinks about that says even granting that neither of the atomic . . . people wants to have thermonuclear war, it may go off by itself. This is really a daily terrible situation. So you cannot even predict who the next American president will be, not even that. You can have guesses, and the guess can prove to be right, but you cannot predict this with any certainty in the way in which I can predict that you and I will die, and some other things. So in other words, political situations, however the details differ from one case to another, and in some cases the differences are absolutely hair-raising, and yet certain fundamentals are the same, and the most fundamental issues concern that—the most fundamental issues—and [these are things] with which Aristotle is concerned. There are other reasons for that. I mean, another reason is this, to which I can now only allude. Aristotle's subject at first glance seems to be that thing, the *polis*, which I will translate [as] the city. That was not a prejudice of Aristotle, because he just happened to live in a society in which the city was the predominant form of social organization. Aristotle[11] gives a very philosophic reason already. In other words, *polis* is for Aristotle a philosophic concept, and to say "the Greek city-state" shows a deplorable lack of understanding. The city is the preferred form of human society quite regardless of whether you can have it everywhere on the globe or not, say, on the North Pole or so; that's uninteresting. But it is the preferred form of social organization. One reason is this—no, *the* reason is this: it is the natural form of association. Now why it is natural? Of course not because Greeks are accustomed to that, that would be absurd, but because it is large enough so that all human or natural purposes of men can be satisfied, and not too large so that the mere bulk might prevent the proper solution of these problems. And one can state it descriptively as follows. A society in which everyone knows everyone else is too small for fulfilling all the purposes of men, performing all functions of men. A society in which most members do not have any personal knowledge of most other members is much too large, because then you make all real decisions on the basis of very insufficient knowledge; for example, if you elect the people to governing offices. The right mean is a society in which everyone knows a personal acquaintance of everyone else, so that if someone is running for election you have a reliable way of finding out about them. And not too small, this was the notion. In other words, that was despised as a silly prejudice, and Hobbes and such people scorned that, and yet in our society suddenly—and Aristotle called the other thing which was unbearably big, he called [that] Babylon—with a word which also plays a certain role in the biblical tradition as you know, it so happens: Babylon, the big city where no one knows one another really, and where all kinds of terrible things can go on and no one is aware of them. And that was old-fashioned . . .

But now what is the problem of the metropolitan areas except in a complicated roundabout way a return to Aristotle's problem? And don't think that I, who somehow have some love for Aristotle, say that; other people who are studying this urban problem[xiv] are compelled to use the Aristotelian model in order to articulate this problem of the metropolitan area.[12] No earlier

[xiv] Strauss may have in mind Edward Banfield and Morton Grodzins, two of his colleagues in the political science department at the University of Chicago, who co-authored *Government and Housing in Metropolitan Areas* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958).

thinker, however great, can help us in the solution for present-day problems, for the same reason for which Aristotle couldn't solve the problem of any of you if you lived contemporary with him, for example, whether you should marry or not. Aristotle could really not solve that problem. He could help you in clarifying your mind about it, but the solution, the jump, has to be made by the individual. And the same applies of course also to political matters. That could not be done, but Aristotle might very well have been more enlightening about the principles than others. You see, you must—I suggest also another consideration, a very external one . . . If you look at the great classics, at the famous political works written throughout the ages, I think there are only two which deal for political purposes, social purposes, with *all* relevant considerations. For example, you cannot say that Locke in the *Treatise of Government* deals with all the details. He deals with a very narrow, but as he saw it the central issue, but not with . . . He wrote his treatise; his Letter on Toleration is an entirely different thing, and to say nothing of the others. There are only two [that deal with all relevant considerations], and Aristotle's *Politics* is the ancient one, and the modern equivalent—I think the only one is Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* which has the same breadth, and that is an important consideration. I don't say that it is the only one, but [it is] an important consideration, whether someone in trying to understand political phenomena really enters with the necessary concreteness into the teachings. Aristotle does that, Montesquieu does that. I don't believe anyone on the same level—I mean, someone who writes a kind of textbook, perhaps even a collective textbook could of course in an encyclopedia way deal well with everything, but that an individual with a first-rate mind and [who] tries to penetrate the whole in all its important parts, I think Aristotle and Montesquieu are the greatest examples of that.

We could go on, and I haven't touched on the nonacademic prejudice[13] against Aristotle and quite a few other things, but perhaps Mr. Schrock and I will divide the next meeting among ourselves.

Session 2, March 31, 1960

This session was either not recorded or the audiotape did not survive. For what can be presumed to be roughly equivalent content, the reader is referred to session 2 and session 3 of Strauss's 1967 seminar on the *Politics*.

Session 3: April 5, 1960
The household and the *polis*; acquisition (book 1)

Leo Strauss:[i] I don't know whether the main features of Aristotle's argument in this part of the *Politics* has become clear to those of you who have not read, as you are supposed to have read, this part. Now[1] Aristotle has described at the beginning the relation of the *polis* to the primary associations, and the most important primary association is the household, because the village is superseded by the *polis*. You cannot live in a village and in a *polis* at the same time, but the household remains. While being a member of the *polis*, you are also a member of the household; therefore the household is more important, the most important of the primary associations because it survives in the *polis*. And now Aristotle speaks then of the household first, or more precisely of the art of managing the household. Managing the household is called in Greek [LS writes on the blackboard]—*oikos* is the household, and *oikonomein*, organization of the household. That's the origin of our term economics. So we can then use the word economic art, but we must understand it as Aristotle means it. The economic art is the art of managing the household.

Now the household consists of two parts, obviously: human beings, and beings which are not human, either animate or inanimate; and the most important part is of course the art of managing the human beings. And this again is subdivided into two parts: the art of managing the free human beings (this is the wife and the children); and the unfree part are the slaves. To repeat, the main part of managing a household is the managing of human beings, but that does not exhaust the art of the managing the household, because these people must also eat, to take the most elementary things. Therefore it is his function to somehow to supply food for them, and of course also drink and shelter and so, but that's clear. Now let us call this the art of acquisition, because acquisition is even involved in a sense even if you have an inherited estate, because still something has to be done to get this year's produce. Now this art of acquisition is absolutely essential to the art of managing the household, but subordinate because we do not live in order to eat, but we eat in order to live. And the difficulty which arises here on this level is this: by some strange accident, let us say to begin with, it happens that many people say the art of acquisition is the art of making money. And Aristotle regards this as an atrocious error, as a perversion of something or other. Therefore the discussion of moneymaking plays such a great role. If men were sensible, that would not be necessary; but unfortunately they are not sensible, and therefore this great error is to be discussed at great length. This is the main subject of this part: the distinction between the general art of acquisition, the natural art of acquisition, and an unnatural art.

Now we must read some of these sections in the text. That is indispensable. And now, Mr. Shrock, you have—good. Well, we do not have to read everything. Perhaps 1256a15, on page 19, about ten lines from the top.

[i] The session began with remarks about student papers (Strauss would like them to be typed) and opening the window.

Reader:
That the art of household management is not identical with the art of acquiring property is obvious." (1256a12-13)

LS: Yes, or with the art of acquisition, I would say. All right.

Reader:
It is the function of the latter simply to provide, but it is the function of the former to use— (1256a13-15)

LS: In other words, we acquire in order to use; and therefore the higher thing, that in the service of which acquisition takes place, is use. What the manager of the household has to do is, chiefly, to take care of the proper use of the acquisitions. Well, for example, to take care that people don't ruin the furniture, and get the right kind of food and are properly taken care of. The acquisition is only subservient, but indispensable. Ya?

Reader:
for what art can there be, other than that of household management, which will deal with the use of the resources of the household? But the question whether the art of acquisition is a part of it, or a separate art altogether, is one which admits of a divergence of views. If a man who is engaged in acquisition has to consider from what different sources he can get goods and property, and if property and wealth include many different parts, we shall first have to consider whether farming is a part of the art of acquisition, or a separate art: indeed we shall have to ask that question generally, in regard to *all* modes of occupation and gain which are concerned with the provision of subsistence. This leads to a further observation. There are a number of different modes of subsistence; and the result is a number of different ways of life, both in the animal world and the human. It is impossible to live without means of subsistence; and in the animal world we may notice that differences in the means of subsistence have produced consequent differences in ways of life. (1256a13-23)

LS: So in other words, that is a very broad question, this question which seemingly belongs only to the household: the question of how to acquire food, in the first place. This affects the whole way of life of men, and therefore it affects the *polis* too. Aristotle will then go into the various forms in which men can take care of their food and the outcome, although not explicitly stated, is this: that there is only one way of supplying food, as [a] general way for the community, which is appropriate to the city, and this is agriculture. But he leads up to that. So in other words, that has a very great consequence regarding the *polis*; therefore Aristotle enters into it. Now let us read that.

Reader:
Some animals live in herds, and others are scattered in isolation, according as they find it convenient for the purpose of getting subsistence—some of them being carnivorous, some herbivorous, and some, again, omnivorous. Nature has thus distinguished their ways of life, with a view to their greater comfort and their better attainment of what they need: indeed, as the same sort of food is not naturally agreeable to all the members of a

class, and as different sorts suit different species, we also find different ways of life even inside the class of carnivorous animals—and equally in that of the herbivorous—distinguishing species from species. What is true of animals is also true of men. Their ways of life also differ considerably. The most indolent are the pastoral nomads. They acquire a subsistence from domestic animals, at their leisure, and without any trouble; and as it is necessary for their flocks to move for the sake of pasturage, they also are forced to follow in their tracks and to cultivate what may be called a living and moving farm. (1256a24-36)

LS: The implication is they can never live in a *polis* because they have to live through changing their domicile.

Reader:
There are others who live by hunting; and of these, again, there are different kinds, according to their different modes of hunting. Some live by being freebooters: some, who live near lakes and marshes and rivers, or by a sea which is suitable for the purpose, gain a livelihood by fishing; others live by hunting birds or wild animals. Most men, however, derive their livelihood from the soil, and from cultivated plants. (1256a36-40)

LS: So in other words, they are—this last class, the agriculturers, are those from which the citizens, the inhabitants of a *polis*, stem. [The] *polis* is a community that is mentioned here only at the beginning, but that goes without saying throughout the book: the *polis* is a community primarily of agricultural people. That doesn't mean that each one has to do the farming himself. He can have servants and so to do it, but the source of livelihood is farming. Yes?

Student: What is a freebooter?

LS: A robber, robber. Barker was a very delicate Englishman, and "robber" would perfectly do as a translation. Robbery, sure. We come to that question of robbery later. You see also that Aristotle distinguishes the ways of life in a manner which might remind you, and may have reminded Mr. . . . , of Marx. The economic conditions determine the way of life. That could almost be read out of it. We have to make one correction immediately: What determines the way of life according to Marx, and what according to Aristotle? How does Marx call that basic stratum which according to him determines the whole human life?

Student: Production.

LS: Production. Aristotle doesn't speak of production. Aristotle speaks of food or sustenance. That is important. And the second point, of course: Aristotle never says that this is determining of everything else. He only says that it is one determinant or, rather, to speak more in the manner of Aristotle, is one condition. You cannot have a *polis* without agriculture, but you can have agriculture without a *polis*; and moreover, you can have an agriculture and a good *polis*, or an agriculture and a bad *polis*, and agriculture of this type and of that type and so on. But agriculture is only a condition, not a determinant. Yes. And you see throughout the emphasis on nature: just as nature assigned, as it were, to the different species of animals different food, a similar division is effected by nature regarding men. Some are nomads, others are fishers, others are robbers;

others are farmers. Now is there another point you would like to bring up? We must put the emphasis on the big things. Yes?

Student: I'm not sure I understood that point, that was that Aristotle says that the economic conditions . . .

LS: Yes. The word economic conditions is so ambiguous. That is the reason why I brought in Marx. Economic conditions may mean the modes of production, as in Marx.

Same Student: He means ways of getting food, and that's it . . .

LS: Yes, the ways of getting food.

Same Student: Can that determine the way of life?

LS: To some extent, yes. Ya, but it is more precise to say it is a condition. It is something without which the *polis* is not possible, but it does not give the *polis* its character. It does not even as such necessitate the *polis*, because there are tribes, agricultural tribes, who have no—who live in villages, and have no *polis*. That's also possible. It's only a minimum condition: without agriculture, you cannot have a *polis*. And what Aristotle is going on to say in the sequel: while agriculture is absolutely essential and healthy, trade is a problem. To some extent it is necessary, Aristotle admits that. But it must be subordinate in the overall picture to agriculture. That is also Plato's view, and we must come to that later. Now let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
The different ways of life (at any rate if we take into account only those who follow an occupation dependent on their own labours, and do not provide themselves with subsistence by exchange and petty trade) may be roughly classified as five—the pastoral, the farming, the freebooting, the fishing— (1256a40-1256b2)

LS: Yes. But why, he changes the order without anything—the nomadic, that of the robber, the fisherman, the hunter and the farmer. Yes?

Reader:
But there are some who live comfortably by means of a combination of different methods, and who eke out the shortcomings of one way of life, when it tends to fall short of being sufficient in itself— (1256b2-3)

LS: Yes, that is uninteresting now. In other words, you can mix the various ways. Yes?

Reader:
by adding some other way. For example, some combine the pastoral way of life with freebooting: others combine farming with the life of the chase; and similar combinations may similarly be made of other ways of life, as needs and tastes impel men to shape their lives.

Property of this order is evidently given by nature to all living beings— (1256b3-10)

LS: Yes, "by nature herself." That's emphasized. Ya?

Reader:
from the instant of their first birth to the days when their growth is finished. There are animals which, when their offspring is born, bring forth along with it food enough to support it until it can provide for itself: this is the case with insects which reproduce themselves by grubs, and with animals which do so by eggs. Animals which are viviparous have food for their offspring in themselves, for a certain time, of the nature of what is called milk. (1256b10-15)

LS: Ya, the "nature of the so-called milk." You see, Aristotle steps outside for a way and speaks then of "the so-called milk," you see, as if he did not know of it. Everyone knows of milk. Now that we have understood milk, we understand really what we name by that word "milk" which we use thoughtlessly all the time. In other words, the fact that the mothers of human beings are supplied with milk for taking care of the babies, that's the clearest case or [the one] most familiar to all of us of how nature supplies the proper food. Not [a] human contrivance in any way. And Aristotle says something like this obtains even for men for later on. Yes?

Reader:
It is equally evident that we must believe that similar provision is also made for adults. Plants exist to give subsistence to animals, and animals to give it to men. Animals, when they are domesticated, serve for use as well as for food; wild animals, too, in most cases if not in all, serve to furnish man not only with food, but also with other comforts, such as the provision of clothing and similar aids to life. Accordingly, as nature makes— (1256b15-21)

LS: "If." If, if. That's a crime. You see why that is a crime; because "as" states it as a fact; "if" states it conditionally. Ya?

Reader:
Accordingly, if nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, all animals must have been made by nature— (1256b21-23)

LS: No. Purposeless is also not correct. "Nothing incomplete"—which of course is not quite true; as Aristotle says, nature makes many mistakes. There are people born without sight and so on and so on. So he makes it—I mean, the statement is rather extreme for Aristotle, but Barker makes it still more extreme. We will discuss it when we are through.

Reader:
all animals must have been made by nature for the sake of men. It also follows that the art of war is in some sense a natural mode of acquisition. Hunting is a part of that art; hunting ought to be practiced—not only by wild animals, but also against human beings who are intended by nature to be ruled by others and refuse to obey that intention— because war of this order is naturally just. (1256b23-27)

LS: Let us stop here. Now that is a very strange statement, isn't it? I mean, a very simplistic teleology: the lions have been created for the sake of man and the poisonous snakes have been created for the sake of man. Well,[2] perhaps you can get some medicine out of that poison or you can have very nice carpets from the skin of lions or what[ever]. What does he mean? Now the statement deviates radically from what Aristotle says in his biological writings.[ii] There is no end of an animal or plant species outside of that species. The horse is meant to be a horse and not for human use. The rattlesnake is meant to be a rattlesnake and nothing else. So that is a great problem, why Aristotle introduces here this extreme statement in which he admits not merely the internal teleology, if one can call it [that], namely, that the stomach, for example, of a lion is useful and necessary for the lion and his living, but it is useful for something outside of the lion, namely, man. That is a very great question. What does he mean by that?

Student: I wonder, is this—as I said, the quotation here would come into play, the first instance of the man in one part, it's all the same. And then—

LS: The species, that's important. The horse does not live merely for its own sake from Aristotle's point of view, but it lives also and especially for the species, namely, to propagate another horse.

Same Student: Now which is the primary instance of the horse as such: its own self, or the species as such?

LS: Well, the two things really are inseparable in Aristotle's view, and one could say the emphasis is on the generation of beings equal to it. The horse generates a horse. The fact that the desire for self-preservation and the desire for the preservation of the species—now there are certain signs of that. For example, the latter is called in the case of man, love—love—and that naturally gives rise to poetic presentation of love. It is much harder to give a poetic presentation of the desire for food than [of] the desire for procreation. That is not a proof, but it is only an indication that even in our ordinary understanding we admit that this procreating is of a higher dignity than the mere preservation of the individual. And it is also indicated by the fact that the pleasures deriving from these two, or connected with these two desires are so much more intensive in the one case than in the other. So that from Aristotle's point of view the procreation of the species, that has something to do—propagation has something to do with eternity, to put it very simply. Always. Whereas self-preservation has—mere self-preservation of a mortal being cannot have anything to do with eternity. These are so much the reasons which Aristotle has in mind. But the difficulty here is this: the difficulty here is the external, the simple and almost unqualified statement of an external teleology. We must try to understand that. Yes?

Student: Barker translates it as, he says "it is equally evident that we must believe that similar provision."

LS: Yes, sure. You see the ambiguity. It is manifest that we must believe, that we must opine, one could translate it. The one thing seems to convey the notion of necessity, knowledge. The

[ii] See, for instance, Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*, 640a-641a and his *Generation of Animals*, 715a.

other verb there takes it back. There are more indications of it. Let us try to understand the thesis in itself, and I think we should start in considering that from the other paradoxy occurring here. The other paradox, you must have observed, is the statement about robbery, robbing. You see, it is very strange. Aristotle thinks that trade is something rather low and morally dubious, not natural. But robbery is one natural form of gaining one's livelihood. Is it not strange? Well, what he means by that robbery is of course all kinds of things—hunting, hunting. But that means not only the hunting of animals, but also slave raids, as it appears. Naturally we have to be decent about it and have to raid only such people as are by nature slaves. That goes without saying. But unfortunately we know that the slave raiders do not make these nice distinctions, and therefore it seems to be a rather shocking proposition.

Now what then does Aristotle mean? What does he mean? The statement of that external teleology, that all plants are for the sake of the brutes and the brutes are for the sake of men, and that is so simply, you know, no problem. Let us call that a simple expression of the belief in the beneficence of nature. Ya, but that is so, and therefore there is some evidence that this was taught in Greece prior to Aristotle. But Aristotle makes a certain change in that immediately on the surface: that beneficent nature authorizes war, so this beneficence is not such a simple beneficence, you know, because slave raid is one part of the art of war, as he indicates. On the other hand, to understand that, let us consider the alternatives. Beneficent nature authorizes only the most peaceful activities. Then nature would be perfectly beneficent. But then you must be radical: then you have even to exclude agriculture, because agriculture is a harsh thing. That we have forgotten. It means violating the mother earth. Then we must be radical and say: Only a nomadic vegetarian life is worthy of man. And we have traces of that in Plato's *Republic*: in the first city they are vegetarian.[iii] And of course we have also the great example of the Bible: Cain and Abel, Abel being the nomadic shepherd and Cain being the agriculturalist; and only the victim of Abel, not that of Cain, was pleasing to God. And these notions we find also everywhere.

So in Aristotle, in other words, it does not go to that extreme. But then we modern ones smiling about these primitive notions, we say: Well, that's nonsense, to talk of beneficent nature. Nature is so far from being beneficent, is malignant, is inimical to man. Is this not much more realistic? Must we not get everything from nature against her will? That notion is implied in the familiar phrase conquest of nature, which Aristotle rejects all the time—you know, he says nature supplies, nature supplies; you don't have to fight her. She gives. That is one possibility. And then some people will say: Well, that is much too melodramatic or poetic to speak of nature as the enemy; let us speak as practical men, and as scientific men, of nature as indifferent. She doesn't turn for man, either in a friendly or in an inimical way. All right, let us consider that. These people say man is an accident. Man was produced by natural forces, but it could have happened differently. Some little change, slight change a couple of million years ago, and man would never have seen the light of the sun. It's a mere accident. But that is the issue, this little thing. Is man an accident? Is it an accident that there is a being in the world which can behold the world?

Now in order to understand this one must consider Aristotle's notion of God. The Aristotelian God is not like the biblical God, omniscient. What Aristotle thought about God is difficult, but

[iii] *Republic* 372a-d.

one thing is clear: the Aristotelian God is not omniscient. The Aristotelian God knows only the forms, the forms—the essences, you can say. Even that is a problem, but let us assume that. The laws of nature, in modern language; not the individuals, not the particulars. Man knows both, the forms and the individuals, the particulars. Man is the only being which is open to the whole as whole.[iv] Now[3] a world which is, without containing within itself a being which can see it, which can understand it, is an imperfect whole. It is a desert. Now maybe the world might abound with lions, tigers, rats, vipers, eagles, what have you; and if there were no men there, it would be a desert.

Now the modern answer is of course: Well, that is human pride. If the foxes could talk they would say exactly the same thing. The trouble is only that foxes cannot talk; therefore this argument is not valid. Even if it is mere pride, there is some reason for that pride. Or in other words, it is improperly [4]described as pride; therefore an indifferent nature would be a nature for which man is simply an accident. That is denied by Aristotle. Whether that denial is defensible or not is a long question, but it is a serious question. It's not something which one can dispose of like that. Therefore, if nature is not indifferent to the being of man, then it becomes inevitable to discuss the two simple alternatives: inimical and beneficent. Aristotle implies an argument which shows that to understand nature as inimical is indefensible, and I can show this in a very simple way. I use an example which I have used very frequently in class; those who have heard it are requested to forgive me for the repetition. A nineteenth-century writer has brought out very forcibly the view of nature as an enemy, and that was Melville. Now in one of his novels this passage occurs. Someone who believes in the beneficence of nature—who plays the role of a confidence man in Melville's novel, you know, because he wants to make the people confident in the beneficence of nature.[v] Now this man speaks of the beneficence of nature, and then another man[5] says, "Who has given you eyes to see all these beauties?" and to which this other fellow says, "An oculist in Philadelphia. My eyes are so poor that I would be blind if human art, as distinguished from nature, had not given me my eyesight." Aristotle was familiar with the fact that nature does not always produce perfect human specimens; he was very much aware of this, as we shall see. But he said this: Look, what did this fellow in Philadelphia do in curing the defect of your eyes? How did he know that it was a defect, except by looking at an eye which was perfect by nature? This art merely imitates or assists nature; it cannot be described as simply acting against nature, as conquering it. Nature, the goodness of nature is presupposed in this very argument which claims to establish the inimical character of nature.

One can therefore state this argument presented here by Aristotle as follows. A certain harshness of life which makes it necessary for man to violate mother earth by becoming an agriculturalist and also to introduce slavery, if a certain kind of slavery, is essential to the very goodness of nature. There could not be man, and man developing his highest faculties, without these certain kinds of harshnesses. Differently stated, pity or compassion is in itself a passion, an affect, which is as much in need of control, and rational control, as anger or any other affect. It is not the guiding affect of Aristotle, and in particular not of his *Politics*. Still, this does not quite explain the Aristotelian preference or apparent preference for brigandage or robbery, as distinguished from trade. Why has robbery a certain superiority? What is characteristic of a robber? He takes

[iv] One of many allusions to *De Anima* 430a10-25, 431b21-22.
[v] Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1990), 132 (chap. 21).

away from other human beings. He takes away from other human beings. That is very bad and so, but it has and can have a certain respectability. He doesn't crawl, surely not. He is, in a peculiar way, free. I will elaborate that. It is absolutely inevitable for man to be dependent on nature. Man cannot be the master of nature. Even if he is a master in the sense described here: the plants for the sake of the brutes; the brutes for the sake of man; that is not mastery proper because he was put into that by nature. So man is dependent on nature essentially. This dependence on nature must be included in every sensible concept of human freedom. Freedom could then mean, at the most, that one is not dependent on men; more precisely, that this individual is not dependent on other individuals. Still more precisely: that man is not dependent for his livelihood on other men's good will. A man who is dependent for his livelihood on other men's good will is an unfree man. He doesn't have to be technically a slave: he may be a beggar, but that is not a form of human freedom.

Now if you look at the situation from this point of view, you see that in this perspective the robber has an initial advantage over the trader. The trader cannot demand, and he is in this sense subject—in the olden times when socialism was not yet so rampant as it is now you could see it when entering into any shop: the people were excessively polite. Today they are excessively impolite because they know they will not be thrown out for bad service, but this excessive politeness is something slavish, something servile from Aristotle's point of view. That's not—please don't misunderstand Aristotle to mean that he is in favor of gangsterism. No, he would be in favor of very severe punishment for robbery within society, but only in this broad consideration at the beginning where he does not yet speak with necessary precision as to what is to be done within civil society, he expresses this slight preference.

Now he develops in the sequel the crucial point, because the correct question for Aristotle is the difference between two arts of acquisition: the natural art, which in the most desirable case and also the more frequent case is agriculture; and the unnatural art which is trade. What is the distinction between the two? Let us read the sequel, where we left off.

Reader:
It follows that one form of acquisition is naturally a part of the art of household management. It is a form of acquisition which the manager of a household must either find ready to hand, or himself provide and arrange, because it ensures a supply of objects, necessary for life and useful to the association of the polis or the household, which are capable of being stored. These are the objects which may be regarded as constituting true wealth; and the amount of household property which suffices for a good life is not unlimited, nor of the nature described by Solon in the verse,

'There is no bound to wealth stands fixed for men.'

There *is* a bound fixed, as is also the case in the means required by the other arts. All the instruments needed by all the arts are limited, both in number and size, by the requirements of the art they serve; and wealth may be defined as a number of instruments used in a household or state.

It is thus clear that there is a natural art of acquisition which has to be practised by managers of households and statesmen; and the reason for its existence is also clear. (1256b28-39)

LS: Yes, this is the conclusion of the discussion of the natural art of acquisition, which is based on this notion of nature of which I spoke and which leads to the practical conclusion that the natural form of acquisition, the most favored form of natural acquisition, is agriculture. Most favored because without agriculture you cannot have a *polis*; you cannot have a *polis* on the basis of nomadic life and of fishers and so on, except very accidentally. Now we have to understand that other art, that other possibility of understanding the art of acquisition. You see already here a point. The natural art of acquisition is finite, limited by its nature. Of course a man can collect innumerable sheep, innumerable forks, innumerable spoons, but that is plainly silly; but if someone would collect innumerable dollars it is not so plainly silly. There is no intrinsic limit if you look at money as money, whereas there is an intrinsic limit if you look at things for use. I mean, you can have surely a house; you can also have another house in the country, but fifteen houses, if you are three people, doesn't make any sense. But this consideration does not apply to money because of the homogeneity of dollars. One dollar, whether it is the first dollar you have or the forty-millionth, is homogeneous to the first. There is no natural limitation here. Someone raised his hand. Yes?

Student: The first fork is the same as the forty-millionth fork, too.

LS: Yes, but still, what do you want to do with forty million forks [laughter], if you are three people in your house?

Same Student: Yeah, but the thing is that you have to apply the thing that you can do things with two dollars that you can't do with one dollar, whereas with a fork, if you have a fork, you can't use a second one to eat the same meal.

LS: So that forks are by nature limited, yes? And you can even make a distinction between forks used for this kind of work and that, and so on.

Same Student: Not because they're homogeneous but because there's a limit to the number you can use at any one time.

LS: But that is precisely what I mean. You can have a very large number of objects and still there would be a very small number of each kind: houses, forks, combs, whatever have you. But regarding money, there doesn't enter the difference of kind. It is all of one kind, and therefore there is no natural limitation. That is the basis for the fact that the object of avarice is money, coins or bank notes, and not forks. I mean the typical—look at all the famous presentations of misers in the tradition. I mean, these people who collect forks, or pancakes, for that matter [laughter] (there is a famous story about that), they are plainly crazy, but the miser who collects money is not plainly crazy. That's the problem. Now?

Student: I think the point being raised here comes out when he talks about usury. It's that the money isn't in any sense real or useful in itself. Isn't that the point that's being made?

LS: That is also a point, but that both things are connected. The derivative character of money, the abstract character of money, is the reason for the possible infinity.

Same Student: There was a reason for what you talked about . . .

LS: Ya. Now there was someone else who was displeased with this answer—yes?

Student: Why are there are many kinds of forks and only one kind of money?

LS: Oh well, I don't know this well, but I suppose you use a different fork for eating a certain kind of fruitcake than for a steak. Or am I completely wrong in that? [Laughter] I believe it is really true. Is there someone here who has . . . upon reality? [Laughter] I think it is true.

Student: Or the difference between tablespoons and teaspoons.

LS: Spoons. Yes. [Laughter] . . . Yes, but—oh you know that. If you go to any restaurant you will see it immediately. So we can forget about that. Now let us go on. There is another kind of acquisitive art, ya?

Reader:
It is thus clear there is a natural art of acquisition which has to be practiced by managers of households and statesmen, and the reason for its existence is also clear.

But there is a second form of the general art of getting property, which is particularly called, and which it is just to call, "the art of acquisition." (1257a38-41)

LS: No, acquisition is really not a good word for that. I would call it the art of moneymaking. Ya?

Reader:
It is the characteristics of this second form which lead to the opinion that there is no limit to wealth and property. There are many who hold this second form of the art of getting property to be identical with the other form previously mentioned, because it has affinities with it. In fact it is not identical, and yet it is not far removed. The other form previously mentioned is natural: this second form is not natural, but is rather the product of a certain sort of experience and skill.

We may start our discussion of this form from the following point of view. All articles of property have two possible uses. Both of these uses belong to the article as such, but they do not belong to it in the same manner, or to the same extent. The one use is proper and peculiar to the article concerned; the other is not. We may take a shoe as an example. It can be used both for wearing and for exchange. Both of these uses are uses of the shoe as

such. Even the man who exchanges a shoe, in return for money or food, with a person who needs the article, is using the shoe as a shoe; but since the shoe has not been made for the purpose of being exchanged, the use which he is making of it is not its proper and peculiar use. The same is true of all other articles of property. (1256b41-1257a15)

LS: Now is this clear? Is this distinction clear, that everything of this kind of—but in principle, everything is susceptible of a twofold use: of its proper use, and of the use of it which is not proper. "Not proper" does now not mean improper, but it means it's not peculiar to the thing. You can exchange shoes, trees, chalk, eyeglasses, what have you; that applies in the same way to everything. But then there is also a peculiar or proper use for the thing: of eyeglasses, to see better with; of shoes, to be protected against stones while walking; and so on and so on. And the whole discussion, later discussion follows from that. Some of you will know that this is in a way the starting point of Marx later on, for his understanding of what commodities[6] [are], the commodity as distinguished from the thing itself. Yes?

Student: Well, what would he say about gold? Is that . . . use exchange?

LS: He will say that. Well, you know quite well that gold has a twofold use. You can use it as ornament, and some people do, but it has this peculiarity, that it is fit as a means of exchange, more fit than, say, paper, and that is one great invention of modern man, that he could make paper as a means of exchange. You know, that was a great feat, that you have something which has no intrinsic value whatever and is a means of exchange. Aristotle didn't know about that, and whether his economic doctrine has to be rewritten for this reason, I'm not competent to say. But Aristotle lived in a society in which the means of exchange were themselves intrinsically valuable things. But still, gold as used as a means of exchange is not the same thing as gold itself, which has also its use values, obviously, I mean not only for ornament but also for useful purposes like teeth, for example. Now is this point clear, that everything is susceptible of this twofold use? Take the shoemaker: he doesn't make the shoes for wearing them; he makes the shoes, except perhaps one pair from time to time, for exchanging them. So he uses the shoes for a purpose not peculiar to the shoes. He could do the same thing also with chalk: exchange. Is this clear? Exchanging, one could say, is the abstract use of the thing as distinguished from the concrete use. Yes?

Student: Is it totally irrelevant to bring up the point that Plato says this is very natural, this is the essence of being natural, to have the shoemaker make shoes because he's naturally fitted for it, or is that irrelevant?

LS: No, it must have, since it probably has something to do with that, but perhaps—do you believe that there is a contradiction between Aristotle and Plato at this point?

Same Student: Well, I just have the feeling that the fact that division of labor is after all, I think, the basis of the exchange in the first place, and since that's considered so radically natural I just have a feeling—[vi]

[vi] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: —infinite units of grain to get infinite other things. You will produce grain all the time, and what will happen to you? That is what Aristotle is driving at. What will happen to you? You will forget to live while becoming ever better at acquiring, and that is an absolutely unnatural life. That is the point at which he is driving. Acquisition is essentially something subservient to living, but by the perfectly natural and necessary exchange—and even money because exchange would be much too cumbersome if there were no money—we create the possibility that men become acquisitors and cease to be livers, if I may say so. Do you understand? That is the point. As long as production manifestly serves the purpose of life, there is no danger; there is no error possible. Ya? Good. Money creates the danger—although money itself is innocent, but it creates the danger which wouldn't exist without it. Now he is working up his way toward that. Would you go on?

Reader:
Exchange is possible in regard to them all: it arises from the natural facts of the case, and is due to some men having more, and others less, than suffices for their needs. We can thus see that retail trade is not naturally a part of the art of acquisition. If that were the case, it would only be necessary to practise exchange to the extent that sufficed for the needs of both parties. (1257a15-18/19)

LS: In other words, the retail trader is a man who does nothing but exchange, whereas Aristotle thinks of the case where one neighbor has too much milk and the other has too much grain, and then they exchange. And there is no problem here, because no one will become a mere acquisitor because of this inevitable convenience. Yes?

Student: Barker has here in parentheses that if that were the case (this is Aristotle) it would only be necessary to practice exchange to the extent that sufficed for the needs of both parties, and then Barker says, "and not to the extent of the making of profit by one of the parties at the expense of the other." Do you think that's a justification for . . .

LS: Yes, that is in a different way, in different words what I said. I mean, in other words, exchange is not necessarily retail: the retail trader as retail trader[7] does nothing but exchange, and he is speaking here of neighbors who on occasion exchange. This occasional exchange is inevitable. It's inevitable because—let us assume that everyone has the same plot of land. Let us take the simplest example: the same amount of cows or sheep, or whatever he has. There is always, by some accident, some shortage at one point. For example, the farmer has been ill and couldn't work properly, or something else, or they might have two children too much, [so] there is a shortage. But they have something else which they can offer their neighbors in exchange.

Same Student: But is the . . . that Aristotle sees in this that somebody is gaining at the expense of the other, which is what Barker says.

LS: Yes, that is in the spirit of Aristotle, but it is not said here. We come to that later. Yes?

Reader:
In the first form of association, which is the household, it is obvious that there is no purpose to be served by the art of exchange. Such a purpose only emerged when the

scope of association had already been extended. The members of the household had shared all things in common: the members of the village, separated from one another, had at their disposal a number of different things, which they had to exchange with one another, as need arose, by way of barter—much as many uncivilized tribes still do to this day. On this basis things which are useful are exchanged themselves, and directly, for similar useful things, but the transaction does not go any further; wine, for instance, is given or taken, in return for wheat, and other similar commodities are similarly bartered for one another. When used in this way, the art of exchange is not contrary to nature, nor in any way a form of the art of acquisition. Exchange simply served to satisfy the natural requirements of sufficiency. (1257a18-31)

LS: In other words, that is not essentially different from what you do when you cultivate your plot and milk your cow. That is only—there is no essential difference, that you get the milk today from your neighbor, because your cow for one reason or another doesn't function. That is not a fundamentally changed situation. Ya?

Reader:
None the less it was from exchange, as thus practised, that the art of acquisition developed, in the sort of way we might reasonably expect. The supply of men's needs came to depend on more foreign sources, as men began to import for themselves what they lacked, and to export what they had in superabundance; and in this way the use of a money currency was inevitably instituted. The reason for this institution of a currency was that all the naturally necessary commodities were not easily portable; and men therefore agreed, for the purpose of their exchange, to give and receive some commodity which itself belonged to the category of useful things and possessed the advantage of being easily handled for the purpose of getting the necessities of life. (1257a31-38)

LS: You see now, it's easier to handle gold than cows. Think of transportation.

Reader:
Such commodities were iron, silver, and other similar metals. At first their value was simply determined by their size and weight; but finally a stamp was imposed on the metal which, serving as a definite indication of the quantity, would save men the trouble of determining the value on each occasion. (1257a38-39)

LS: Now let us stop here. What Aristotle describes in the sequel is when once there is such a homogeneous element—let it be iron to begin with, that doesn't make any difference—but which is exchangeable everywhere and therefore indirectly usable for every purpose. Then the desire for acquisition has no longer a goal, a natural goal as you have in the case of forks, of houses, and what have you. And therefore this way of life starts, which is simply the acquisitive life. One can state the Aristotelian doctrine as follows. Life is impossible without acquisition. Even if you have as an estate, landed estate which is sufficient for your life, [which] you have inherited from your parents so you do not acquire any new land or so; still the yearly produce has to be acquired again and again. In this sense, acquisition is essential to human life. But one thing is the acquisition essential to human life; an entirely different thing is an acquisitive life, a life devoted to acquisition, and so that it forgets life itself. And that becomes possible only through the

introduction of money, and this is a wholly unnatural life. One reason which Aristotle gives is later on.[vii] It is this point: a man may have innumerable coins, gold, and he can starve to death, in a famine, for example. He refers to the Greek story of Midas: whatever he touched became gold, so even his food became gold, and he starved to death. And the first condition of natural wealth is of course that it keeps you alive by giving you the sustenance which you need.

Now I must bring in a wholly extraneous question. I mean, what is the time, because my watch doesn't function. Ten past five? Then we have to hurry a bit and read only the most urgent passages. There is a remark about the infinity which is of some interest, a bit later on. Paragraph 13.

Reader:
It is a further point of difference that the wealth produced by this latter form of the art of acquisition is unlimited. The art of medicine recognizes no limit in respect of the production of health, and the arts generally admit no limit in respect of the production of their ends (each seeking to produce its end to the greatest possible extent)—though medicine, and the arts generally, recognize and practise a limit to the means they use to attain their ends, since the end itself constitutes a limit. The same is true of the retail form of the art of acquisition. (1257b23-31)

LS: Now let us stop here. Do you understand this remark about a certain legitimate infinity and an illegitimate infinity? Every art is in a way infinite. He gives the example of medicine. It is impossible to say that a certain, for example, successful operation cannot be made still better; still better perhaps only in the form of still more convenient, that you can do it without having so and so many instruments around and so and so many nurses around, or to have the period of recovery reduced, and all this kind of thing. In this sense there is an inner infinity of art. But this inner infinity has nothing to do with a bad infinity, namely, with the multiplying of means which only obstruct and are in no way a help to the art. Each art limits, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the means which it can use. And the same is true therefore also of the economic art. The economic art proper sets a limit to wealth, whereas this acquisitive art of which we have spoken is in every respect infinite. And somewhat later when he speaks of the reason of this disposition, he speaks of theories about living. Paragraph 16.

Reader:
But the fundamental cause of this state of mind is men's anxiety about livelihood, rather than about well-being; and since their desire for that is unlimited, their desire for the things that produce it is equally unlimited. Even those who do aim at well-being seek the means of obtaining physical enjoyments— (1257b41-1258a4)

LS: Bodily enjoyments. I mean, that is more literal. Yes?

Reader:
and, as what they seek appears to depend on the activity of acquisition, they are thus led to occupy themselves wholly in the making of money. This is the real reason why the

[vii] 1257b.

other and lower form of the art of acquisition has come into vogue. Because enjoyment depends on a superfluity, men address themselves to the art which produces the superfluity necessary to enjoyment; and if they cannot get what they want by the use of that art—i.e. the art of acquisition—they attempt to do so by other means, using each and every capacity in a way not consonant with its nature. The proper function of courage, for example, is not to produce money but to give confidence. The same is true of military and medical ability: neither has the function of producing money: the one has the function of producing victory, and the other of producing health. But those of whom we are speaking turn all such capacities into forms of the art of acquisition, as though to make money were the one aim and everything else must contribute to that aim. (1258a4-14)

LS: That is really the reason for everything which preceded it. The end is man's life as a human life. This human life needs acquisition as subservient function, but[8] this means can become the end. However, this is possible only on the basis of money, as Aristotle explains. But Aristotle makes it apparent it is not merely the money, the hoarding of money, which is the danger; the other is the variety of mere bodily enjoyment. That is infinite. You can always have more and more comfort. You can have air conditioning, but then you might have a more refined air conditioning so that you never for a moment have any unpleasant feeling on account of the weather. And that can go on infinitely. In other words, to use the expression of Locke, which[9] brings out very beautifully what Aristotle has in mind, the wrong end is that end which Locke recommended: comfortable self-preservation. That's infinite. The true end is virtue, a human life, a humane life; and this humane life consists in treating everything according to its particular character, properly, as he said before. For example, to treat medicine as the art of healing and regard the monetary result as purely accidental. The physician who is primarily a moneymaker is not a true physician, as a general who is primarily concerned with booty, monetary or not, which he makes and not with a victory for his society, is as such a bad general, and so on. Now Aristotle goes into all kinds of questions which are important which we cannot unfortunately enter. There is only one point which seems to me indispensable for our purpose, and that begins at 1259b—no, we can perhaps begin at 1259b37. Do you have that? All right: "Since there are three parts of the art of the management of the household, one that of ruling as a master, of which has been spoken before." Do you have that? "One the art of the father, and the third the matrimonial one." Do you have that? . . . Go on.

Reader:
While the head of the household rules over both wife and children, and rules over both as free members of the household, he exercises a different sort of rule in either case. His rule over his wife is like that of a statesman over fellow citizens; his rule over his children is like that of a monarch over subjects. The male is naturally— (1259a40-1259b2)

LS: Yes. Do you see the difference? The statesman cannot boss around, cannot command in the way in which a king commands. He is only temporarily in charge, so to speak, the statesman. The king is permanently in charge. Yes?

Reader:
In most cases where rule of the statesman's sort is exercised there is an interchange of ruling and being ruled: the members of a political association aim by their very nature at

being equal and differing in nothing. Even so, and in spite of this aim, it is none the less true that when one body of citizens is ruling, and the other is being ruled, the former desires to establish a difference—in outward forms, in modes of address, and in titles of respect—which may remind us of the saying of Amasis about his foot-pan. The relation of the male to the female is permanently that in which the statesman stands to his fellow citizens. (1259b4-10)

LS: Well, what he means is this: there are certain forms of rule where the ruler and ruled are clearly distinguished by nature, say, father–children. There are other cases in which they are not distinguished by nature, and that is in a republican society, where the ruler of today will be the ruled tomorrow, and so on. Since there is no natural distinction between them but only the accidental fact of having been elected, men must make conventional signs by which to show the difference. Well, I'm sure you all know what these conventional signs are; for example, you say "Mr. President"; you don't say "Ike,"[viii] and this kind of thing, and others. So that is clear. Now here he comes back to the question of male and female, husband and wife. The husband is by nature the ruler of the wife. Aristotle knew of course of henpecked husbands; he alludes to them here. That is something wrong; that is something very like saying someone is short-sighted or limping or has some other defect. But the natural thing for the husband is to rule the wife. Or it has something to do with this more respectful relation which the statesman has to the others who will be statesmen next year, and not the king towards his subject—but only with this understanding, of course, [that] they won't change their places. That is what he says here. I mean, the wife of today will not be the husband of tomorrow, whereas the ruled citizen today may very well be a ruling citizen tomorrow. Yes?

Reader:
Paternal rule over children, on the other hand, is like that of a king over his subjects. The male parent is in a position of authority both in virtue of the affection to which he is entitled and by right of his seniority; and his position is thus in the nature of royal authority. Homer, therefore, was right and proper in using the invocation "Father of Gods and of men" to address Zeus, who is king of them all. A king ought to be naturally superior to his subjects, and yet of the same stock as they are; and this is the case with the relation of age to youth, and of parent to child. (1259b10-18)

LS: Yes. Well, it is so difficult to follow Barker because he is so very prolix . . . Where is the discussion of slavery. . . Here, paragraph two, on the next page.

Reader:
Here a preliminary question may be raised in regard to the slave. Has he any "goodness" beyond that of discharging his function as an instrument and performing his menial service—any goodness of a higher value, such as belongs to temperance, fortitude, justice, and the rest of such moral qualities? Or has he no "goodness" outside the area of the bodily services he renders? Either alternative presents difficulties. If slaves have a "goodness" of the higher sort, in what respect will they differ from freemen? If they have not it is a surprising thing: they are human beings, with a share in reason. (1259b23-29)

[viii] President Dwight D. Eisenhower, known as "Ike."

LS: Do you see the problem? Let us stop here because we cannot read all. Do you see the problem? The question is: Can slaves have virtues? If they have no virtues, they are useless even as slaves. Think of a slave who is constantly drunk and thievish and lazy: what's the use of that fellow? So he must have some virtues. But if he has virtues, why is he a slave? Should he not be a free man? Is it not a real difficulty? Now Aristotle finds the solution in the sequel, and I believe you should read that, because that is a typical example of Aristotelian thinking and analysis. The crucial point is that virtue differs from type of man to type of man. The moderation, the temperance of a man, for example, differs from that of a woman. Women were supposed to be more reserved in former times, not to talk in the presence of men. The opposite was not true. So if a man were as reserved as a woman ought to be, there would be something wrong with him as a man, and vice versa. Also, of a child it has been said, and so Aristotle would have fully approved of it, they should be seen but not heard. That's the virtue of a child. It would obviously not be the virtue of a man. And now, starting from this principle Aristotle reaches a conclusion: of course a slave must have virtues, but the virtues of a slave, so that what makes him a good slave disqualifies him from being a free man. So the problem is solved. And then the paradoxy which seems very strange: what about a craftsman, free craftsman, you ask to do some plumbing or whatnot in your house: must he have virtue or no? And Aristotle says no, because you don't live with him. He has to be sober during the few hours when he works, naturally; otherwise he would be poor as a craftsman. But what he does outside of it, I mean, outside of these hours where he serves, that is not necessary. And so we reach the seemingly paradoxical result that the higher degree of virtue is required of the slave than of the free worker. There is no contradiction whatever in Aristotle, but it is one of these peculiar subtleties which modern thinkers try to abolish in favor of a more simplistic but also more formalistic view. Now there is only one point which I think—one thing we should discuss because it has a very important application, especially in social science. That is the last paragraph. . . . page 37, paragraph 15.

Reader:
This may serve as a sufficient discussion of these topics. There remain for discussion a number of questions—the relation of husband and wife, and that of parent and child; the nature of the goodness proper to each partner in these relations; the character of the mutual association of the partners, with its qualities and defects and the methods of attaining those qualities and escaping those defects. (1260b8-13)

LS: In other words, that is the most important subject for management of the household: how to treat the wife and the children. This remains. It will not be discussed here by Aristotle, the most important part of the economic art. Why? Why does Aristotle not discuss the most important part of economics in the economic section of his *Politics*? Someone else may read, because Mr. Schrock is occupied by writing.

Reader:
All these are questions which must be treated later in the discourses which deal with forms of government. Every household is part of a polis. The society of husband and wife, and that of parents and children, are parts of the household. The goodness of every part must be considered with reference to the goodness of the whole. We must therefore consider the government before we proceed to deal with the training of the children and

women—at any rate if we hold that the goodness of children and women makes any difference to the goodness of the polis. And it *must* make a difference. Women are a half of the free population: children grow up to be partners in the government of the state.

As we have already discussed some aspects of the household, and as we are to discuss the rest at a later stage, we may dismiss our present inquiry as finished and makea new start. Let us first examine the theories of those who have expressed opinions about an ideal form of government. (1260b13-25)

LS: Ya. Well, the translation is very bad in certain crucial points; I will come to that later. Now what does Aristotle discuss, which present-day problem does Aristotle discuss here and not quite recognizable, but recognizable with a little bit of an effort? I mean, you know in present-day analysis of political phenomena, all kinds of suggestions are made [about] where to begin. Where to begin. Aristotle has made a remark at the beginning, you may recall: you begin with a smaller unit, for example, with a household. Now what is the contemporary equivalent to beginning with a smaller unit in order to understand political society? You laugh—you know it.

Student: Primary groups.

LS: Primary groups.[ix] That is, in a way, in Aristotle the issue. Of course a primary group is studied in as value-free a way by present-day social science as political society, but still it is important. Now what does Aristotle [mean]? If we translate what Aristotle says into present-day language, what would it mean? The family is a part of the *polis*, therefore it can only to a very small extent be properly studied by itself. The most important information about the family depends on the political association and its peculiar character. Now translate that in terms of primary groups.

Student: Well, he'd say that . . . considered first of all the forms and substance of government in order to understand primary groups.

LS: A primary group in Moscow is not a primary group in New York; and that has something to do with the fact that New York is a part of the United States and Moscow is a part of the Soviet Union. You know? In other words, the primary group is always already molded by the political society within which it occurs. You do not get a pure primary group anywhere, because the whole affects decidedly its parts. Aristotle speaks here of—naturally, because he is concerned not only with describing political society but with finding out what is the best political society; and regarding the family he's not concerned with describing it but with finding out what is the best form of living together of husband and wife and of parents and children. At the end he gives the remark, makes the remark about what the whole book is about, which he has not stated as clearly at the beginning. He says: "We shall speak after we have made a new beginning, and we

[ix] Charles Horton Cooley was the most prominent early sociologist to use the distinction between primary and secondary groups; he did so in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons), initially published in 1902 but reprinted just four years before the present course, in 1956. In the same year, Talcott Parsons, who further developed this distinction, published with Robert F. Bales *Family Socialization and Interaction Process* (Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd; rpt. Routledge, 1998).

shall first consider those who have made assertions regarding the best regime." That is the form in which I think that should be translated. The best form of government is too narrow because when you speak of a form of government in our age you imply a distinction between the government and the sovereign. The form of government is something different from the sovereign. That distinction is absent from Aristotle. The government *is* the sovereign, and therefore the so-called form of government means so much more than it means today. It means the whole way of life of a society. We will come to that later. This is the theme, the guiding theme of Aristotle's *Politics*: the best regime, the best way of life of a human society. Why the governmental element is so important for the best way of life, that we must try to elaborate [in order] to understand. But Aristotle doesn't have a mere prejudice in favor of politics, but that is based on certain reasonings concerning the peculiar contribution of government to the way of life.

Ya, I'm sorry we have to rush through so much, but I said at the beginning that we will have a cursory reading of the whole *Politics*, and that means that we have to rush through much, but every one of you, especially those who read papers, can contribute to the improvement of our procedure by concentrating on the most important subjects in his own presentation. That would make it easier.

Session 4: April 7, 1960
Plato's *Republic* (book 2)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —sensible people would wish, and that is here only implied, sensible people don't wish for impossible things; that is somehow, in these olden times, taken for granted. So the theme is then the best political association, and this is possible only under the most favorable conditions, not always. This is best for those who can live to the highest degree according to wish. In other words, you do not live on the North Pole for this purpose. That would be impossible, because there too much energy would be needed for keeping warm, and that energy is taken away from other purposes, and similar considerations. Or on . . . you could also take as an example. Now go on.

Reader (Mr. Steintrager):
We must begin by investigating ideal forms of government other than our own; and we must investigate not only forms which are actually practised by states that are accounted to be well governed, but also forms of a different order which have been designed by theorists and are held in good repute. (1260b29-33)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Here he uses the word ideal, which he avoided before. Aristotle says we must also consider the other regimes which some of the cities use, some of the cities which are reputed or which are said to be well governed by law; and if there happen to be some others which have been said by some men—said, meaning only spoken, not in practice, not actually used—and which are reputed to be all right. Now you see this point here. Aristotle says our theme is the best political association. But in order to prepare that study, we look first at the other political associations: (a) those which are actually in use in given cities, but not at all because there some which have already such bad reputations, a bad smell to begin with, that no sensible man would waste his time on their study. So we are prudent men; we limit ourselves to those which are worth considering because they have at least the reputation that they . . . This will prove to be Sparta, and Crete, and Carthage, especially, as we shall see later. But Aristotle says also we will consider those which are not in actual use but which are only, as he would say today, on paper. But Aristotle, since they were not so bookish at that time as we are now, he'd say [those] which are spoken, which exist only in speech. And here the most important example is of course Plato. Aristotle treats the actual constitutions, if I may use that term, and the blueprint constitutions on the same level. That's important. Aristotle is not such a narrow realist that he would dismiss the blueprint constitutions if they are made by sensible men, and experienced men without inquiring into them. You seem to be surprised by this observation?

Student: . . . what he meant by blueprint.

LS: Well, what Aristotle calls a spoken one. We would say blueprint or in book form; Aristotle says which are spoken. Now let us go on. Now why do we do that?

Reader:

The gain of such a discussion will be twofold. In the first place, we shall discover what is right, and what is useful— (1260b33-34)

LS: Ya, "right" does not mean here—that's not what I would say. I would say "the correct," because it doesn't have the connotation of justice. So that the correct and the useful can be seen. You see, the useful is not necessarily correct; something can be useful under very unfavorable circumstances, but it is not a correct solution. Two different considerations, that's clear. In other words, we can learn something from these constitutions already in existence, either in practice or on paper. Yes?

Reader:
In the second place, when we proceed to seek for something different from the forms of government we have investigated, we shall not be thought to belong to the class of thinkers who desire at all costs to show their own ingenuity, but rather to have adopted our method in consequence of the defects we have found in existing forms. (1260b34-37)

LS: That's a strange reason, isn't it? It is not it sufficient to say we look at these other things because we can learn something from them. Aristotle adds here what he does in no other book of his, another consideration: lest we be accused of showing off. You know? Aristotle wants to show there is need for a new investigation because of the defects of the associations which are already known, either from books or from practice. Why does he make this strange remark which he wouldn't make in his *Physics* or in other places?

Student: One reason could be the political things are things that can be known, at least in some way, at least in opinions, everybody . . .

LS: I don't get it.

Student: Well, everybody has some opinion about political things, whereas in physics or whatever . . . these are more technical subjects.

LS: Yes, but could one not be accused in a purely theoretical book too of trying to be inspired by ambition by desire for novelty for novelty's sake? . . .

Student: . . . it's not theoretical . . .

LS: Yes?

Different student: . . . dialectical, so to speak . .

LS: Yes, but what has the second reasoning to do with that? . . .

Student: . . .

LS: No, he simply says he doesn't want to be accused of wishing to show off.

Student: It seems to me that if I were . . . a new system, and the . . . I wouldn't want to be dismissed for ambition . . .

LS: Yes, but why does he do that in the *Politics* and not in other works? Well, I think it is something very simple: ambition . . . is somehow more at home in politics than in academism. Aristotle was not a fool. He didn't know that professors were . . . this kind of thing. But there the inappropriateness is so clear; but in politics, a certain ambition and a certain detracting, therefore, from the merits of . . . is more taken for granted. It is not as shocking . . . considerations. So Aristotle, that has something to do that he is aware of the fact that even speaking as a theoretician about politics, he somehow takes on the character of a politician. It has something to do with that. Now let us go on.

Reader:
Our beginning must start from the point which is the natural starting-point of such a discussion. One of three alternatives must be adopted. All the citizens must have all things in common; or they must have nothing in common; or they must have some things in common, and others not. (1260b38-39)

LS: Let us stop here. Now that is a complete . . . in that all cases are covered by that: in everything, in nothing, or in something. Whenever this simple logical procedure is helpful, Aristotle avails himself of it, of course, as every sensible man would. And then he disposes immediately of one: that the citizens should have nothing in common. That is impossible: they must at least have in common the place. At least. Some more than that, but at least that. But still, which of the two other alternatives: all or some? Now that becomes interesting because such an enormously wise man as Plato said they should have everything in common. So in other words, Plato's *Republic* is of the utmost importance because it is one of the basic alternatives in describing society. Aristotle regards it as a wholly wrong position to take, but to begin with, logically it is as important a possibility than the other which Aristotle adopts. The third which is possible is immediately impossible on the face of it. The Platonic alternative is the investigation to which he then turns. Now we cannot read that all, of course. I mention only a few points here. A little bit later when he says—now when he raises this question: "in the *Republic* of Plato, for there Socrates says." Will you read that? A few lines further on: six, seven, eight lines further on, that children and women should be in common.

Reader:
It is certainly possible that the citizens should share children and wives and property with one another. This is the plan proposed in the *Republic* of Plato, where Socrates argues for the necessity of community of wives and children and community of property. We are thus faced by the question whether it is better to remain in our present condition or to follow the rule of life laid down in the *Republic*. (1261a4-9)

LS: Ya. I would translate this more literally: "or according to the law written in the *Republic*." That is, I think the expression is deliberately chosen. Plato's *Republic* contains a written law. This written law—in other words, Plato's *Republic* is not simply the rule of living intelligence. It is entirely without . . . There is a law governing this rule of living intelligence. That is of some importance. Now when we look at Aristotle's account of Plato's *Republic*, one thing must be

absolutely striking to every reader, and I'm sure it struck Mr. Steintrager. What are the institutions of Plato's *Republic*, the key institutions?

Mr. Steintrager: The guardians. Well—

LS: That is not characteristic. We have guardians in Chicago too. You call them cops.

Student: But he does not consider the place of philosophy at all.

LS: Yes. Complete silence about philosophy. In Plato's *Republic* there are three institutions: community of women, children, property, what you may call absolute communism; equality of the two sexes; and third and highest, the rule of philosophers. And Aristotle is absolutely silent about that. That seems to be grossly unfair to Plato. In other words, he can transform our initial impression of Aristotle's pedestrian characterization into a more precise formula by simply saying Aristotle is silent about the most striking feature of Plato's *Republic*, the rule of philosophers. How could one defend Aristotle—I mean, not out of a childish desire to defend him, but simply taking into consideration that Aristotle was a serious man, you know, simply who would not make an unfair criticism for the simple reason that an unfair criticism is uninstructive, and Aristotle wants to learn something and to teach something. There is a school of thought, I have been told, which argues as follows: that Aristotle misunderstood Plato. That has been said *n* times. This school of interpretation goes on as follows and says: Every great thinker misunderstands every other great thinker—and Aristotle is only a beautiful example of that—and which has this very flattering and very comforting implication: those who do not misunderstand great thinkers are the mediocrities. [Laughter] That means of course far more: that the mediocrities are the only ones who are truly wise, because the man who understands *n* different positions of the highest order is of course wiser than a man who understands only one position: his own. Now that, I think, is absolutely absurd [laughter] and only must be held up to ridicule. Now why did Aristotle make this seemingly gross blunder, or permit this gross act of injustice, to be silent about Plato's most splendid or extravagant proposal: that the philosophers should rule. Do you want to say something?

Student: I was going to say that since he's a philosopher, to tend to this point again means stepping out into the role of politician.

LS: Yes, but still, after all, Plato's reasoning. Plato is a philosopher . . . political reasoning. Yes?

Student: It seems to me that it was assumed that the people who would read this were aware of Plato's philosophy and that Aristotle was only interested in disproving certain parts of Plato's philosophy, namely, the parts which talked about absolute communism. And so if he could disprove one portion of Plato's *Republic* it wasn't necessary for him to consider the rest.

LS: Yes, but does he limit himself entirely to the communism issue here? . . . For example, look at the—he plainly discusses the law. The communism issue doesn't arise, and yet, since he was speaking about Plato's famous proposal he also . . . the laws, not because it is relevant to

communism but it is because it is, how can I say, the second part, the second version of Plato's famous proposal. I think that is not sufficient, really, to say that, although it is not unimportant.

Student: In the *Ethics*, doesn't he dispose of that by saying it takes a different kind of wisdom, that philosophic wisdom is different . . .

LS: That is true, but only implicitly. He does not argue it out against Plato here, especially. But still there are other things which he has said in the *Ethics* which he repeats here because they are pertinent to the argument here. No, I think the reason is much simpler: Aristotle read Plato very carefully. That's all. Now when you read the *Republic* carefully you see that the philosophers are introduced only as a means for an end. Later on they become an end, but they are introduced only as a means for an end. They build up this communist society with equality of the sexes, and everyone is charmed by that proposal, and then the question arises: How can we get that duty? And in this connection the philosophers are introduced. The philosophers are introduced only as a means for an end. Now you can say that is one of Plato's jokes, and it is in a way true, but we have another proof. Plato wrote a summary of the *Republic* in the dialogue called *Timaeus*. [LS writes on the blackboard.] At the beginning Socrates gives the summary of a conversation they had the day before and that makes sense only as a reference to the *Republic*, I mean not to the conversation of the *Republic* itself, but to a conversation in which Socrates told the *Republic* to some people. You remember, the *Republic* is not a dramatic dialogue but a narrated dialogue. Socrates narrates it to someone; and in the *Timaeus* you see to whom he narrates it. Now in this summary, there is no reference to the rule of philosophers. So Plato emphasizes this thing which appears already from the *Republic*, that the rule of the philosophers is in a way an afterthought. Today when people speak of the political part of the *Republic*, which is a rather loose expression, they mean by that the part preceding the introduction to philosophy. That has some basis in what Plato means. So that is not due—in other words, Aristotle is simply precise by sticking to the fundamental things, which are communism and the role of women.

Now what then is the fundamental error of Socrates in the *Republic* according to Aristotle? We cannot read everything; I will summarize this point. The fundamental error consists in Socrates's assertion that goodness is identical with oneness. If goodness is identical with oneness, that city is best which is one to the highest possible degree, but a communist city is more one than a non-communist city; hence, a communist city is best. The reply of Aristotle is generally this: of course in one sense it simply must be one, but it cannot be one beyond a certain point without ceasing to be a city. If it becomes too much one it becomes a household, and if it would become ever more one it would become a human individual, and hence not a city. A city is necessarily an articulated thing consisting of many human beings, and even of many kinds of human beings, and this must be the starting point for any plausible remark regarding the good city. There is a passage which has a certain difficulty which we should read. It is toward the end of 1261a, when he says, after he has referred to the *Ethics*—

Reader:
It is a principle which has to be observed even among free and equal citizens. They cannot all rule simultaneously; they must therefore each have office for a year—or by some other order of succession and for some other period. In this way it comes about that all are rulers, just as if shoe-makers and carpenters changed their occupations and the

same men were not always shoe-makers and carpenters. It would be better indeed if the principle followed in the arts and crafts were also applied to the affairs of the political association; and from this point of view it is better for the same men always to be rulers wherever possible. But where this ideal is impossible, through the natural equality of all the citizens—and also, it may be argued too, because justice requires the participation of all in office (whether office be a good thing or a bad)— (1261a33-1261b3)

LS: Let us stop there. Now what does he mean by that? And what does he mean in the context? Now let us first see this. Even if men are equal, i.e., even if there is no difference of kind: they all are members of the same species, all are free citizens; it is necessary that some of them should rule at a time and others be ruled. The qualitative difference between rulers and ruled is one crucial qualitative difference, qualitative multiplicity within the city. This qualitative difference is compared by Aristotle for a moment to the qualitative difference between shoemakers and carpenters. A city cannot be a city if it doesn't have craftsmen of various kinds, and Aristotle refers then in passing to another possibility:[1] under certain conditions we could have a clear-cut permanent distinction between rulers and ruled. Some people rule always and others are always ruled, and that is a preferable possibility according to Aristotle. Let us keep this in mind for further reference. The word "ideal" which Barker uses is of course not there and should simply be dismissed. It's "the best." The reasons are not stated. But the best is not always possible. You may have a multitude of citizens who are equal, and where therefore it would be unfair and unworkable that some would be permanent rulers and others permanent[ly] ruled; therefore you can have only have ruling and ruled in turn. There can only be an exchange of ruling and ruled, and Aristotle gives as an—to illustrate this for a moment, and that is an indication of the reason why the sempiternal rulers would be better, as if the shoemakers and carpenters would change every year: this year Mr. X is a shoemaker; next year he's a carpenter, and vice versa. Now that is not desirable, because we don't want a jack of all trades but solid men thoroughly aware of all niceties of the arts, which comes [2]after experience. And that is of course the reason why rulers, sempiternal rulers who accumulate the experience of government throughout their lives, are preferable to people who are only temporary rulers. But [for] Aristotle (notice this point in passing), what is best in itself is not always possible; and where it is not possible, it is not just. And this leads to a crucial distinction: what is best is everywhere the same; what is just differs from place to place and from time to time.

That is the crucial character of the Aristotelian politics, distinguishing it from the doctrines which were developing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which tended at any rate to develop a doctrine which would show what is just everywhere and at all times. Taking the example of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, there the key teaching is the teaching regarding sovereignty. What are the rights of the sovereign? And that means of course these are rights which a sovereign must have at all times, in all places, regardless of circumstances. For Hobbes, the best and the just coincide. The same is true, with minor modifications, of Locke, of Rousseau, Tom Paine and many others.[3] And this little remark at the end, when he says regardless of whether ruling is good or bad: what does he mean by that? That's also a great question discussed in Plato's *Republi*c, for instance. Well, the solution in Plato's *Republic* is this: that only those can be rulers who regard ruling as a nuisance, as a burden, as something bad. The ordinary politician or statesman regards ruling as a boon. And Aristotle says: I don't have to decide the question whether it is a boon or a burden; whatever it may be, if the citizens are equal, both boons and

burdens must be distributed equally, otherwise it's unjust if equal people get unequal burdens or unequal boons. That is what he means by that. He develops then the point further on and states the principle very clearly. The end of the *polis* is not properly described by unity, although some unity is essential, but by self-sufficiency, as he has said before: a society self-sufficient for the actualization of man's potentialities. The kind and degree of unity to be demanded from the city or for the city depends on the function of the city. We cannot simply speak of unity without considering that function. Now Plato—we cannot go into that. If we would consider Plato's doctrine carefully, Plato in his way of course considers all these things. The difference is very subtle and does not come out in each remark which Aristotle makes, not because Aristotle is unfair; he brings out the salient point very clearly but he says Plato obscures certain things which Plato himself admits and even emphasizes.

Now let us consider for one moment the question: What is Plato's concern in the *Republic*—why he makes these outlandish proposals, absolute communism? Let us say this: communism means the abolition of privacy, and that is Plato's explicit intention. Plato goes beyond present-day communism, not only because of the community of women and children but the abolition of privacy is very strict. Not only the police, or however it may be called, but everyone can enter everyone's room at any time in Plato's *Republic*. That is abolition of privacy. Now why does Plato do that? What is the reasoning behind that? Privacy means to have a sphere where you are somehow exempt from the city, from supervision by the city; where you can do what you please. And therefore that creates a tension[4] [in] the city. Here there is a private sphere; and there, there is a public sphere. Plato follows, in a way, the logic of politics or of patriotism by saying: full dedication to the *polis* demands abolition of privacy. Or differently stated, a city, a political society, to be good must be inspired by fraternity. By fraternity. There must not be strangers living side by side, but there must be fraternity, strictly understood. Not metaphorical, as it is in the French formula,[i] but strictly understood. Now to be strictly understood it means literally that all citizens are brothers. It means a reduction of the city to the family or household.

Now what does family mean? That means that all the members are kindred by common descendants from the same father and the same mother. That of course doesn't work out in Plato's doctrine quite well, although something like it is suggested. We have at least the same mother, same father- or motherland, stemming from the same soil. I cannot go into this extremely interesting subject, which raises the great question of incest. You see, one could perhaps say this: in Plato's *Republic* you have the strongest bond among the citizens through incest. That's a very paradoxical element because obviously A marries B, but in Plato's *Republic* it means a brother marries a sister. That is the practical meaning of the reduction of the *polis* to the household. I cannot go into that, although that is of the utmost importance because the reasoning is roughly this: the institution of incest is the basic institution by which civilization stands or falls, but what the rationale of these commands, these provisions is, is difficult to say. Plato suggests this reasoning. We have the family, which is self-sufficient for procreation but not self-sufficient for defense: much too small a unit. Therefore it is necessary to enlarge the household so that we arrive at a society which is large enough for defense. One must overcome peril; the members of the family [are] to marry outside of the family so as to establish strong bonds among the members of that larger unit among the citizens. Now that means one must

[i] "Liberté, égalité, fraternité"

forbid incest. The forbidding against incest forces the member of that family to marry outside, and against this background can one understand the paradoxy of Plato's *Republic*. In the *Republic*, one can say, Plato experiments with the notion that you can have the strongest bonds among the members of the *polis* through incest. That is the great, one of the great paradoxes. But less paradoxically stated, Plato tries to combine the virtues of the household, closely-knit character, and the virtue of the city, sufficiently large for self-sufficiency. Now why is this not possible, according to Aristotle? He discusses this proposal in the *Republic*: all call everyone and everything mine. Shall we turn to that? 1261b18. At this point, for Socrates believed that this is a sign that the city is one.

Reader:
Even if it were the supreme good of a political association that it should have the greatest possible unity, this unity does not appear to follow from the formula of 'All men saying "Mine" and "Not mine" at the same time," which, in the view of Socrates, is the index of the perfect unity of a polis. The word 'all' has a double sense. If it be understood in the first sense, the object which Socrates desires to realize may perhaps be realized in a greater degree: each and all separately will then say 'My wife' (or 'My son') of one and the same person; and each and all separately will speak in the same way of property, and of every other concern. But it is not in the sense of 'each separately' that all who have children and wives in common will actually speak of them. They will all call them 'Mine'; but they will do so collectively, and not individually. The same is true of property also: all will call it 'Mine'; but they will do so in the sense of 'all collectively,' and not in the sense of 'each separately.' It is therefore clear that there is a certain fallacy in the use of the term 'all.' It is a term which, like the similar terms 'both' and 'odd' and 'even,' is liable by its ambiguity equally to breed captious arguments in reasoning. We may therefore conclude that the formula of "all men saying 'Mine' of the same object' is in one sense something fine but impracticable, and in another sense in no wise conducive to harmony. (1261b16-33)

LS: Do you understand that? What does he mean by the twofold meaning of all saying "mine" and "not mine" at the same time? That can be said, Aristotle says, distributively, we may say, and collectively. For example, all men do the same thing, say, all breathe, all pay taxes: that's distributively. Each does it. But when you say collectively we all elect the president, I mean, there is not a single individual who can say "I elect the president," but we all do it. Those are the two different meanings. Now what does it mean in application to our case? Distributively, each will call the same thing or woman or child mine. Each will call the same thing mine. What is the consequence?

Student: It doesn't belong to any of them.

LS: They will fight. I mean, think of it in practical terms to mean something which cannot be jointly enjoyed, like an apple, for example. You see immediately where you get. Only by distribution and by different people saying of different apples "that's mine" could there be peace. Now what is the alternative? All men call the common things "mine," so no one will say "I, as this individual, regard this as my property." But in the sense in which he says, "I elect the president," namely, we all elect the president, Aristotle says that's beautiful, but not possible.

Why? Because no one will ever get that thing. It will remain common property; it cannot be appropriated. So that sounds fine; it is impossible. The other is manifestly leading to enmity and destruction.

Student: Why do the children have to be appropriated?

LS: Well, let us think of food, or a cigarette, for example . . . that the individual must have some . . . let us assume that all men regard all children as their children. That he discusses later; he says it is the most undesirable solution because it is as good to have no father than to have all as fathers of all. That he develops later on. What he tries to make clear was now only a certain ambiguity in the very formulation, in the formulation "all say of the same, it's mine." And think of the two different cases, your tax payment, your president: your tax payment it is yours alone, not of someone else. Your president is the president not of you in particular, but of you as a member of the community, i.e., all collectively: collectively, not distributively. That is, he wants first to make clear only a fundamental fallacy implied in this . . . formula. The specific reasoning he gives later. Now let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
Not only does it not conduce to harmony: the formula also involves an actual loss. What is common to the greatest number gets the least amount of care. Men pay most attention to what is their own: they care less for what is common; or, at any rate, they care for it only to the extent to which each is individually concerned. Even where there is no other cause for inattention, men are more prone to neglect their duty when they think that another is attending to it: this is exactly what happens in domestic service, where many attendants are sometimes of less assistance than a few. The scheme of Plato means that each citizen will have a thousand sons: they will not be the sons of each citizen individually: any and every son will be equally the son of any and every father; and the result will be that every son will be equally neglected by every father. (1261b33-1262a2)

LS: Ya. That is the point at which—where it would become clearer. The crucial point of one's own. We can also say the private, to make it quite clear. The distinction between the common and the private must be preserved, so much so that even the common must in some way be private, meaning it must be someone's business, for example, to be the general. Otherwise, if you give the responsibility to many, no one will regard it as his business and the thing will be neglected. That is the point where the question of one's own or the private comes in.

Now this is from Aristotle's point of view the fundamental error of communism, Plato's in particular, but of everyone: that the most common, we can say, the simply universal, is the most private, the most intimate. Only under that condition would communism be humanly a solution: that the most common, which applies equally to all, is the most personal, the most intimate. Now I have spoken of that before, I believe; I don't know whether it was in this seminar or the other. Ya, I think that was when I discussed what Aristotle means by saying that man is the most social of all beings, of all animals. Man is more social than any beast and so, because he is an animal which possesses reason or speech. Pure thought, pure and true thought alone makes possible a perfect union among human beings. Every other union is less perfect. Think of bodily union as encompassed with that: bodily union can never be as perfect, and can never be this full identity

of feeling which you can have, to take the extreme case, in the case of a mathematical demonstration, where there is full identity of the thought in each mind and at the same time *knowledge* that we both think the same thing. But precisely for this reason, communism is impossible. That is, one can say, Aristotle's reasoning, because the political association is not an association of thinking beings regarding their thoughts. These are living beings which possess reason, animals which possess reason, but which have also something else than reason. Now what is that? What is the fundamental reason for privacy? What is that which makes privacy something which cannot be overcome? Plato has said that, although he hasn't said it clearly in the *Republic* but rather in that passage of the *Laws*, that single passage of the *Laws* in which he refers to the *Republic*. I always forget; it is either 719—no, 749, *Laws* 749. There he speaks of the difference between the setup of the *Laws* and the setup of the *Republic*.[ii] In the *Republic*, that is almost said in these terms: everything is made common except the things which are by nature private, which are by nature not collectivizable, if I may use this word. Everything else can be collectivized. That is for us a paradoxical thought, because we think the mind or the consciousness is the most private. That was not Plato's view, that's the body: the body has the least community. There are simple examples: if one man has hunger, we can have the greatest compassion and sympathy with the hungry man; we don't have the hunger. Or look to that; I'm taking now mental phenomena which are obviously inseparable from the body. The body is necessarily each one's own body, and because man is a bodily being, communism is impossible. Pure minds could have such a perfect communism. If one would go, which I cannot do here, to Marx, for example, one would see that at the origin of Marx's thought there lies such a notion. The German philosophers had developed a certain doctrine, and the paradoxy of Marx is that he believes he can have communism not in spite of the body but through the body, through bodily labor and its derivatives. I cannot go into that here.

Man is not a purely thinking being but an animal; therefore he has things which are ineradicably his own, and therefore there must be private property. The first act is a very simple one, the most elementary form of appropriation. This point has been elucidated very clearly by Locke.[iii] The most elementary form of appropriation is eating, because, as you know from everyday experience, once you have something, I don't say in your mouth, but surely once you have swallowed it, it cannot possibly belong to anyone else. That is absolute appropriation, and Locke builds his argument for private property on this fact, which is in a certain agreement with what both Plato and Aristotle teach. Now there was someone who—yes?

Student: I don't think, however, reasoning from this analogy of Locke's, that it is self-evident that possession is required for intimacy. In other words, the assumption of Aristotle is that the relation of father to son, and a fatherly relation can also be the relation of husband to wife, the heterosexual relation, possible. Is this possible without possession?

LS: Ya, it all depends what you mean by that. I mean, if you mean it refers . . . as implied in possessiveness. Did you mean that? That would be partly taken care of by mutual possession.

[ii] *Laws* 739.

[iii] *Second Treatise*, chapter 5, section 25 following.

Student: Well, my point is the analogy, for example, of food doesn't seem to hold, because when food is consumed—once you eat it, no one else can eat it.

LS: But the question is whether this elementary fact does not have consequences on the less elementary reality Aristotle did speak of. But I wanted to say only one thing [about] where there is agreement between Plato and Aristotle, and that concerns the fact that there are things which are by nature private, so that they cannot be collectivized; and that is primarily the body, according to Plato, and Aristotle would admit that. Aristotle's argument means fundamentally this. That has consequences on the highest levels. Because man is a bodily being, he must have privacy. He must have privacy; and this privacy also requires then on a higher level private property, because privacy would be imaginable on the basis of common property. For example, if all men could live in barracks and it would be an iron rule, punishable by death, that no one may enter another's room without their permission, that is, permission of the occupier there. I mean, you can have privacy without private property. You can have it. But Aristotle's argument can be stated as follows: the basic privacy admitted by Plato is the body. That leads to privacy in the common sense of the term. We will find a simple example later on. And then that leads on a higher level to private property, as also required. We must follow that. I only try to bring it down to the principle involved: the fact that man is not simply rational. And then I don't think of the fact of passions and so, that is derivative; the basic fact is the body, the fact that man has a body[5] and its parts which cannot possibly be communicated as such, which are essentially a man's own, leads to the rejection of communism in Aristotle's argument. We must proceed step by step. Yes?

Student: In this section where he refers to the father and son relationship being destroyed by every son having, say, a thousand fathers and therefore having none, does he mean that this will be pernicious to the physical development or to the existence of the child, or—

LS: Why don't you wait a moment, we come to it. Aristotle will bring this out more clearly in the sequel. What Aristotle has in mind is something which you all know, but he will develop it nevertheless for your as well as for mine and . . . so I suggest that we go on. Let me see. Where were we? In 1262a, line 13. This sentence where he says it is better to be one's own nephew, another man's nephew, than to be a son in this way. That's the answer to your question. The whole relation becomes watered down. Well, we can read that.

Student: I just wanted to follow up a thought. I thought that Plato's ideal wasn't an absolute communality of fathers and sons, but rather that in practice it would seem to me that as Plato had it worked out that these children would be kept with the parents for a certain number of years and then put into private classes to be instructed so that they wouldn't be completely ignored or neglected.

LS: What Plato means is absolutely no one is supposed to know who his parents and his children are. That is the idea, because otherwise privacy would develop which Plato regards in the *Republic* as such an evil.

Same Student: Then I must be thinking of something else, where the children stay with their parents. I guess it was Sparta.

LS: Oh, Sparta was not communistic. No, no. I think, Mr. Steintrager, if you go on where you left off, that would be the best. 1262a, beginning.

Reader:
There is still a further objection. Each citizen, when he says 'Mine' of any child who is prosperous or the reverse, is speaking fractionally. He does not mean that the child is wholly 'Mine,' but only that he is 'Mine' to the extent of a fraction determined by the total number of citizens. When he says 'He is mine' or 'He is so-and-so's,' the term 'Mine' or 'So-and-so's' is used with reference to the whole body concerned—the whole thousand, or whatever may be the total number of citizens. Even so he cannot be sure; for there is no evidence who had a child born to him, or whether, if one was born, it managed to survive. Which is the better system—that each of two thousand, or ten thousand, persons should say 'Mine' of a child in this fractional sense, or that each should say 'Mine' in the sense in which the word is now used in ordinary states? As things are, A calls by the name of '*My* son' the same person whom B calls by the name of '*My* brother': C calls him '*My* cousin': D, E, and so forth call him '*My* relative,' because he is somehow connected with them, either closely or distantly and whether by blood or by marriage; while besides these different modes of address X and Y may use still another, and call him '*My* clansman' or '*My* tribesman.' It is better to be own cousin to a man than to be his son after the Platonic fashion. (1262a1-14)

LS: Let us stop. Do you see the point? That is the answer to your question. You see, it becomes absolutely watered down; it becomes a mere convention that you say of people younger than you: these are my sons and my daughters. You have not the slightest reason to assume that these are your sons and daughters; it becomes a mere label. The element of affection which issues with both cannot survive, and therefore people will not—now, as Aristotle says, in the cities now, people generally speaking take an interest in their children, are concerned with them. How can you be concerned with people who are your sons and daughters only in name? And even a cousin in the second degree now, that means something to you, provided, you know, if it's your grandparents or great grandparents and so, and that means something to you. But there it doesn't mean anything because the one's own has been abolished.

Student: In other words, Aristotle is not concerned that these people—well, nobody will take enough interest in these children so that they will not have difficulty surviving.

LS: Oh, that can be taken care of by sufficient police methods and so. I mean, the nurses and hospitals do that all the time; that would not be the problem. But this particular affection which children should have they are most likely to get when they are brought up by people who regard them as their own, their own flesh and blood. I mean, why have the words like stepfather, stepmother, foster father, foster mother such slightly complicated meanings? In the best cases compared with the simple parents, why? Because there is some truth to this assumption. There can be foster fathers who are better than natural fathers, without question; but that is not the rule. Now let us first—yes?

Student: Wouldn't the Platonic formulation deal with the objection that affection can arise between—as, for example, a teacher and a student, which seems to me Plato might have known quite easily. And this affection would also lead to an area of privacy which . . . communism.

LS: Yes, but what does Plato do for that reason? Well, Plato is not [a] prude, as you know, and so he puts it in the strongest terms, and he says—well, there are all kinds of bodily relations. We don't have to think of extremes, but simply touching (and even kissing, he speaks of) is permitted only under certain conditions, as a reward for particular heroism in war, for example. So in other words, these privacies are publicly instituted for the sake of the public. I mean, especially that these fellows, in the case of heterosexual relations should generate more children than the others. So that the city . . . Now teachers and this kind of thing, that would emerge in an important level only among the rulers, the philosophers, and that is an entirely different sphere, you know; the mind is so much the preponderant consideration, and in addition, the political function is already there. Surely there are holes in Plato's scheme, and no one knew that better than Plato. Plato was experimenting with that for certain reasons which we cannot discuss while we are trying to make some sense of Aristotle.[iv] —Well, I think we must now go on, and we have to skip quite a few things. If you will give me your book I will find the right [passage]—1262b7, let us take page 46, paragraph 5.

Reader:
Generally, a system such as Plato suggests must produce results directly opposed to those which a system of properly constituted laws should produce, and equally opposed to the very object for which, in his view, this community of wives and children ought to be instituted. Fraternity is generally held to be the chief good of states, because it is the best safeguard against the danger of civil dissensions. Plato himself particularly commends the ideal of the unity of the state; and that unity is commonly held, and expressly stated by Plato, to be the result of fraternity. We may cite the argument of the *Symposium*—(1262b4-13)

LS: Does he say fraternity? That is wrong: friendship. That's really misleading here. Friendship, which has the clear connotation of love in Greek, *philia*.

Reader:
We may cite the argument of the *Symposium*, where, in the discourse on love, Aristophanes is made, as we all know, to speak of two lovers desiring in the excess of their "friendship"[v] to grow together into a unity, and to be one instead of two. Now in the case of two lovers, the result of an excessive desire for unity must be either the disappearance of both of them into a new being, or the disappearance of one of them into the other. (1262b11-16)

[iv] The tape was changed at this point.
[v] In Barker: "fraternity"

LS: Do you see that? I mean, if the lovers seek perfect union, as they are said to seek according to Aristophanes's story, then either they are destroyed, or only one or some mixture of the two will survive, but they cannot both survive the union. Yes?

Reader:
But in the case of the political association the result of an excessive desire for unity would be different: it would be merely a watery sort of fraternity— (1262b17-18)

LS: Of love, of friendship, yes.

Reader:
a father would be very little disposed to say 'Mine' of a son, and a son would be as little disposed to say 'Mine' of a father. Just as a little sweet wine, mixed with a great deal of water, produces a tasteless mixture, so family feeling is diluted and tasteless when family names have so little meaning as they have in a constitution of the Platonic order, and when there is so little reason for a father treating his sons as sons, or a son treating his father as a father, or brothers one another as brothers. There are two things which particularly move men to care for an object and to feel affection for that object. One of them is that the object should belong to yourself: the other is that you should like it. Neither of these motives can exist among men who live under a constitution such as the Platonic. (1262b18-25)

LS: So in other words, the phenomenon of friendship or love is insolubly linked up with one's own, with privacy. There are two things which to the highest degree make men caring for someone and loving it: one's own and the precious; one's own and the preciousness. The preciousness goes together with rarity, I think that is what Aristotle means. If something is very common, [say], we don't love air—well, after someone has tried to strangle us, for a moment, but not ordinarily. But the precious is the rare. Now if you have a thousand sons—now Thomas in his commentary gives this example[6]: single children, why are they so frequently spoiled? Because of their preciousness, they are the only ones.[vi] If they are ten, there is a reasonable watering down of the maternal and paternal affection, and which perhaps is better than this kind of preciousness. In other words, one's own essentially enters this thing.[7]

By the way, here is his reference to Aristophanes, which is of some interest—perhaps not in connection with this seminar in particular, but I would like to mention that. The point which Aristophanes makes in his speech in Plato's *Banquet* is that love is horizontal, meaning two beings try to unite and become a perfect union. And the Platonic doctrine of *erōs* is that *erōs* is vertical—vertical, towards something higher; and therefore the equality of the lovers, of sexual lovers, for example, can only be understood in terms of a vertical love, namely, the lovers wish the sempiternity of the human race. They are concerned not simply with their union but with the sempiternity of the human race, something higher than they. For Aristophanes, love is simply horizontal—and that is the Platonic . . . Aristophanes refers to it.

[vi] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 94.

Now what Aristotle's criticism here of Plato suggests is this; and that is a very interesting thought which I submit to those of you who are interested in this kind of thing: that in the *Republic*, Plato himself seems to make the mistake for which he reproved Aristophanes in the *Banquet*: to have the maximum of union in a horizontal way. I merely mention this to you because it may give you food for thought. By the way, that is by no means far-fetched, because Plato's *Republic* is a reply, an extremely ingenious reply to a comedy of Aristophanes in which communism was suggested, *The Assembly of Women*. But this only in passing. Let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
There is still a further difficulty. It concerns that part of Plato's scheme which may be called the transposition of ranks, under which children born to parents in the inferior rank of farmers and craftsmen are to be transferred to the superior rank of the guardians, and vice versa children born to parents in the superior rank are to be transferred to the inferior. How such transposition is actually to be effected is a matter of great perplexity; and in any case those who transfer such children, and assign them their new place, will be bound to know who are the children so placed and with whom they are being placed. In addition, those problems of assault, unnatural affection, and homicide, which have already been mentioned will be raised even more by this part of his scheme. Transposition of ranks will mean that those transferred from the rank of guardian to an inferior rank will cease for the future to address the guardians as brothers, or children, or fathers, or mothers, as the case may be; and it will have the same effect for those who have been transferred to a superior rank. Such persons will thus lose entirely any deterrent which kinship provides against the commission of these offenses.

This may serve as a determination of the issues raised by the idea of community of wives and children. (1262b25-37)

LS: What he means is this; that's a special point of criticism. The baby transferred from the lower class to the guardians—you remember, in the scheme of Plato's *Republic*—may very well beat or kill his own father. For he becomes a guardian, say, a policeman: in that function, he may very well kill his father without knowing it. [8]In other words, he commits a terrible crime and he does not have the possibility of purgation from the crime, religious purgation, because he does not know that. Impious deeds will be done without the possibility of purgation. Similar considerations apply also to incest. Now I mention this only because that is one of the parts—Aristotle argues here from common opinion. There are certain common opinions regarding what is pious and impious, and he accepts them. Plato does not do that. Plato's *Republic* is a very iconoclastic book. Plato reduces the pious, the holy, to the useful. He makes explicitly the remark: We will regard only those marriages as holy which are useful. Aristotle does not do that, and we must keep this in mind. On the contrary, he keeps these standards intact. Now we have to read a few more passages. Can you turn to 1263a11? That is about half a page later, it must be, when he speaks about the problem of privacy. That also . . .

Reader:
When the cultivators of the soil are a different body from the citizens who own it, the position will be different and easier to handle; but when the citizens who own the soil are

also its cultivators, the problems of property will cause a good deal of trouble. If they do not share equally in work and recompense, those who do more work and get less recompense will be bound to raise complaints against those who get a large recompense and do little work. Indeed it is generally true that it is a difficult business for men to live together and to be partners in any form of human activity, but it is specially difficult to do so when property is involved. Fellow travellers who are merely partners in a journey furnish an illustration: they generally quarrel about ordinary matters and take offence on petty occasions. So, again, the servants with whom we are most prone to take offence are those who are particularly employed in ordinary everyday services. (1263a9-21)

LS: You see, that has very much to do with privacy. One can put it this way, perhaps: the lower and pettier the things are, the greater the need for privacy. That is, we begin with the fact that the parts of the body and the body is not communicable, and then we see that immediately reflected in these lower and petty things: when we get nervous because people are too close on us, in barracks, in boats, or wherever it may be. And then we gradually ascend to that, and precisely in lower and petty things, precisely because property is not such a high thing is it necessary to make it private, because it will lead to constant annoyances.

And now this question which he raises there, that some work hard and get little, and some the opposite: this problem of course arises under any form of communism. Do any of you remember how Lenin solves this problem in his *State and Revolution*?[vii] Because he has to admit that such shirkers might come up even in this—after the complete collectivization of the means of production. There are people who can cut corners under any conditions, and such a radical regeneration of human nature will not be brought about by the socialization of the means of production. Well, the state will wither away and it will have withered away in the end. Of course, there will no longer be courts of law. What do you do in such a case? I forgot the words. [Do you] remember?

Student: He says that socialism for the time being is sort of a capitalistic system where each man will receive according to what he puts into the system.

LS: No, no. Finally, but when you have this—

Student: Oh. Well, after the state withers away then every man will become so accustomed to working to—

LS: Yes, there is one passage in which Lenin admits somewhat grudgingly that even then you might find this kind of shirkers. Well, his suggestion is consistent, and at the same time outrageous, which is perhaps not—I shouldn't have said at the same time: a type of lynching. The other workers will take care of him, but there is no longer a law court, so there is no possibility of a real fair investigation [into] whether this particular individual is or is not a shirker. Good. Now let us see. Let us read the summary judgment on the *Republic* in 1263b15, that this legislation has a beautiful face.

[vii] Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, trans. Robert Service (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), chap. 5, sec. 4.

Reader:
Legislation such as Plato proposes may appear to wear an attractive face and to argue benevolence. (1263b15-16)

LS: Yes. May seem to be—not benevolent; "may seem to be philanthropic," philanthropic in the primary Greek sense, love of human beings. It had a very limited meaning originally; it could be used as Socrates occasionally says: Some people love dogs, others love birds, and he loves human beings. That exists. It did not have this full meaning which it took on later on. Ya?

Reader:
The hearer receives it gladly, thinking that everybody will feel towards everybody else some marvelous sense of fraternity—all the more as the evils now existing under ordinary forms of government (lawsuits about contracts, convictions for perjury, and obsequious flatteries of the rich) are denounced as due to the absence of a system of common property. None of these evils, however, is due to the absence of communism. They all arise from the wickedness of human nature. (1263b16-24)

LS: "Human nature" is a criminally bad translation. "Because of wickedness." Aristotle would never say human nature is wicked.

Reader:
Indeed it is a fact of observation that those who own common property, and share in its management, are far more often at variance with one another than those who have property in severalty—though those who are at variance in consequence of sharing in property look to us few in number when we compare them with the mass of those who own their property privately.

Another consideration must also be pressed. Justice demands that we should take into account not only the evils from which men will be liberated when once they have turned their property into a common stock, but also the benefits of which they will be deprived. The life which they are to live appears to be utterly impossible. (1263b24-30)

LS: Ya. That is the conclusion: communism is utterly impossible, meaning these demand for privacy without which we cannot live well and pleasantly are not fulfilled. There will be a constant necessity of friction. But also the constant interference with another fellow's life in the most petty things: this is unbearable. There is one passage which we should also read, in 1264a, the beginning, where he makes the general remark: but one must not ignore—

Reader:
We are bound to pay some regard to the long past and the passage of the years, in which these things would not have gone unnoticed if they had been really good. Almost everything has been discovered already; though some of the things discovered have not been coordinated, and some, though known, are not put into practice. (1264a3-5)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. That is a very characteristic remark, and very important for Aristotle. What does he mean by that? That can easily be misunderstood. I mean, if everything is already known, Aristotle's political science would seem to have this function: to understand what is and not to propose what should be. What does he say here, as a matter of fact? What does he say? I mean, why does Aristotle's investigation for the best polity make sense? The implication[9] of Aristotle's inquiry is that the best polity does not exist, and to his knowledge has not ever existed. He makes a blueprint of it for possible future use. How is this reconcilable with what he says here?

Student: Well, he says a lot of things are known that aren't put into practice.

LS: Ya, and also not put together. Both, ya. In other words, what he says is there is no institution, we can say, no single institution which has not in fact been discovered by man in the course of the ages, but they are not always, or very rarely, put together in the best way; and that he will try to do. Yes?

Student: Does Aristotle put himself here in a certain historical position, that position being the position after which everything which has been discovered . . .

LS: Ya. You can put it this way. He says this also to some extent in his philosophy: He has discovered the truth, and all his predecessors knew the truth only partially—not in every detail, of course, that is not interesting—but the fundamental truth he thinks he has discovered. That is a very important point. And the same is true in another way of political subjects, only there the proper putting together is being done by him in speech, in books, not in practice. What's the difference between him and Hegel? You know Hegel himself regarded himself as the modern Aristotle, the man who summed up the whole previous development, but so that Hegel is now the true end, whereas Aristotle was only the Greek end, as we could say. What is the difference between Aristotle and Hegel, apart from that—I mean, apart from what Hegel says about it?

Student: For Hegel, not only did he know the things, but they were in actual existence, for the most part. The best possible . . .

LS: In other words, that is one point: for Hegel, the actual establishment of the just society is a condition for the completion of the theoretical philosophy. The metaphysical truth, to use that, could not have been seen before the just society was in principle established. Nothing of this kind in Aristotle. There is no such connection between the establishment of the just society and the finding of the final metaphysical truth, but there is something else which is perhaps more important.[10] What about the future? What about the future, from Hegel's point of view and from Aristotle's point of view? From Hegel's point of view it is so that once the truth is known, the theoretical as well as the political truth, it cannot but spread. There cannot be—at least there may be temporary lapses and errors, but they cannot last, because they have the conscience of the time against themselves so there cannot be a relapse into barbarism. For Aristotle, of course there can be relapses into barbarism; and for Hegel, the older schools of thinking, say Kant, say Descartes, or what have you, say Aristotle, are finished. There is no possibility of their return or of a return to them. For Aristotle, all the errors which are possible can have a most fantastic future. There is no law of progress in this way. There is a word of Hegel's contemporary,

Goethe, which is roughly to this effect. He compares progress to this situation: a ship displacing water. The ship is the truth displacing error, making headway; and at the end, the water, the displaced water is again in control. The ship passes through and the situation remains as before.[viii] That is Aristotle's view of it [and] the older view generally of the situation. But this peculiar "quote optimism unquote" is Hegelian and not Aristotelian. So in other words, for Aristotle the situation is, if I may conclude that, there is a thousand years, five thousand years, ten thousand years—I don't know exactly how Aristotle would have figured it out—there would be a destruction of all civilization through natural causes: floods, earthquakes, what have you. And then there would be, after a long lapse, a recovery; and not in every detail of course, but in principle there would be a new development, and there could be another Aristotle in the next period. And that could happen infinitely over: infinitely over, because the world is eternal, according to Aristotle.

Student: Even if the truth has been discovered, to discover it again is still to discover the truth.

LS: Yes, if there is no memory, surely, ya.

Student: In terms of political science, however, it seems to me that—am I right in saying that Aristotle is saying to Plato that you, Plato, didn't rest your search for wisdom enough on an examination of past and present policies of states?

LS: In other words, Aristotle did not know especially the modern development.

Student: No, that he's saying to Plato that Plato didn't look at political facts enough. Is that what he's saying to Plato?

LS: Not unfair, but he did not have sufficient respect for what men had done politically, and Aristotle says political men are sufficiently competent without philosophy to discover all institutions. They may not be quite competent to put them all together in the best way, and there is where Aristotle comes in. And Plato has a lower view of the competence of political men; yes, sure, there is no question. Let us turn to 1264b. There is probably a new beginning there, a new paragraph.

Reader:
There is also an element of danger in the method of government which Plato proposes to institute. He makes one body of persons the permanent rulers of his state. This is a system which must breed discontent and dissension even among the elements which have no particular standing, and all the more, therefore, among the high-spirited and martial elements. (1264b7-10)

LS: Now does he not flatly contradict himself, or contradict something which he said before? What did he say before?

[viii] *The Autobiography of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. 2, 298 (book 15).

Student: He said it was best that one body should be the permanent rulers, but that this was not always possible.

LS: Yes, that's one thing, but here he seems to say it is always impossible. But here is a qualifier which is not unimportant. What is a special difficulty in the *Republic*: that Plato makes some men, the philosophers, the permanent rulers, and who are the ruled?

Student: The high-spirited and martial ones.

LS: In other words, the rulers are not the soldiers. That's the point and Aristotle will comply with this demand. In his solution presented in books 7 and 8 the ruling class is the armed class, and then the things appear in a different light. The armed men are simply the younger rulers. Contrary to the suggestion of President Eisenhower, that who[ever] is old enough to bear arms is old enough to vote,[ix] Aristotle thought that carrying arms comes first, and at a later age the voting, and therefore there is perfect harmony: these boys who are drafted will not resent being sent out to war by their elders because they know we will be the rulers ten years from now. That's Aristotle's solution. So there is no contradiction. And the last point, a bit later, perhaps one or two sentences later when he comes to speak about happiness.

Reader :
It is a frther objection that he deprives his guardians even of happiness, maintaining that it is the happiness of the whole state which should be the object of legislation. It is impossible for the whole state to be happy unless most of its parts, or all, or at any rate some, are happy. The quality of being happy is not of the same order as the quality of being even. The quality of being even may exist in a whole without existing in either of its parts: the quality of being happy cannot. A further point may be raised. If the guardians are not happy, what are the other elements of the state which are? There is certainly no happiness for the craftsmen, or for the mass of the common people. (1264b16-24)

LS: Do you see that point? Plato's great paradox, that he says: I'm not concerned with the happiness of any part, be that part a section or the individual; I'm only concerned with the happiness of the *polis*. To which Aristotle replies: You cannot have a happy *polis* consisting of unhappy members. While six may be a composite, the even number six,[x] of the three odd numbers, three and three. That's possible, but you cannot add up happiness of the sum out of unhappiness of the numbers. That's again the same point: one's own happiness must be happiness of the individual, and there cannot be a happiness of the whole if the individuals are not happy too.

[ix] In President Eisenhower's State of the Union Address of 1954, he called for the voting age to be lowered to 18.

[x] The audiotape ends at this point. The remainder of the transcript of this session is taken from the original transcript.

There are many more things which we have to dismiss. I mention only one point which is important for the further development, and that concerns Aristotle's critique of Plato's *Laws*. Aristotle rejects Plato's *Laws*, which is a much more commonsensical thing than the *Republic*, on one ground of special importance; and that is that[11] the regime in Plato's *Laws* is oligarchic, which means it gives preference to a part of the population on grounds of wealth. The wealthiest people have the strongest voting right merely because they are more wealthy, and Aristotle thinks that this is a vicious principle. That's very interesting, that the "idealist Plato," when he comes to a practical proposal in his *Laws* should be so tough as to be more oligarchic than the "realistic Aristotle." For Aristotle there is perfect equality—no consideration of wealth—in his best polity. I mean, the whole citizen body consists of reasonably wealthy people; the non-wealthy are not citizens. That is Aristotle's ingenious solution. You see, there's a difficulty: no one is preferred among the citizens on account of wealth. There is no—that is his point. Aristotle will try to give the solution of the political problem by finding a city without a *dēmos*. *Dēmos* means the common people. That is his resolution at which he ends at books 7 and 8. We will come to that later. I believe someone wanted to say something? Yes, Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: I don't understand your explanation of why Aristotle does not refer to the rule of the philosophers, or your explanation of why Plato himself doesn't refer to it in the *Timaeus*.

LS: I think that is—well,[12] the immediate reason for that [is] that in the *Republic* the philosophers are introduced as a means to an end and not as an end. The question therefore concerns the *Republic*, because both the *Timaeus* and Aristotle simply follow the *Republic* on this point.

Student: But surely in the *Republic*, if the end is political, then [that] the rule of philosophers has a central part of that political regime would be worthy of comment.

LS: Yes, but the philosophers are introduced not as the rulers, but as the instruments for putting the communistic society into practice. Now the question—well, Plato had of course his reasons for that. Very generally stated, within the political context, philosophy can come in only as a means and not as it ought to, as the end.

Well then, next time Mr. . . . will read a paper on the rest of book 2 . . .

Session 5: April 12, 1960
Property; constitution vs. laws (book 2)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and that you understood in the main, but you took it lying down as far as your paper was concerned. Do you know what I mean?[i]

Student: No, not exactly.

LS: I mean, after all, you must have had a reaction to it.

Student: I was impressed mostly by Aristotle's thoroughness. As the footnote in the book says, when he criticizes, he criticizes.

LS: Ya. Still, but the question of course is whether the criticism is—I mean, there are certain cases where I believe we are unable to judge: when he speaks of, at that time, well-known political arrangements and presupposes some knowledge of it which we may not have. That can't be helped. But still, you noted one difficulty. He criticizes Sparta and so on very severely, and yet he says of these three regimes—Sparta, Crete, and Carthage—they are justly famous. That sounds almost like irony.

Student: I put it in there because I didn't understand it, but it was mentioned.

LS: Yes, sure. I'm glad you did.

Student: In fact, I could try to explain it.

LS: Yes, try.

Student: It can be said that for all their defects they are better; they try to be mixed regimes and his is practically closer to an ideal form than most of the unmixed regimes, and most of the existing regimes in the Geek world. I didn't think I would have very much to say there.

LS: No, I think it would be helpful. The only trouble is I believe that this is not what Aristotle himself says.

Student: . . . [Laughter]

LS: But still I'm grateful that you tried, at any rate. Now you make clear—I mean, I take the terminology which you use (which goes back to Barker, I suppose) that Aristotle looks at these various regimes from two points of view, from what you call the ideal and from the point of view

[i] Strauss comments on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

of its inner consistency. Can you explain that? And you try to show this in details, even when Aristotle himself does not make the distinction, which may very well be a wise procedure, but could you explain to the class in general by a simple contemporary example what this distinction means?

Student: Well, the example of the system of common meals with Sparta is supposed to be a democratic institution. As a matter of fact, because of the unequal division of property . . . the Spartan laws do not operate as they should. The unequal division of property is an ideal defect, but it might be that the unequal division of property, presumably you could make the system of common meals operate so as not to discriminate against the poorer citizens. The Spartan laws do not do this; they make it worse.

LS: By the way, "ideal defect" is of course—

Student: Is my own phrase, not Barker's.

LS: Yes, very shorthand—

Student: Yes, very shorthand indeed. The "ideal defect" is a contradiction in terms.

LS: Ya, we understand that. Now what I was thinking of was your simple contemporary example. You can criticize a given institution in this country, for example, as not democratic, assuming that the American polity is meant to be a democracy. That's one thing. And then you can raise a more far-reaching question: Is the basic intent of the legislator, of the founding fathers, itself sound or not? So the meaning of the distinction is clear. Good. Thank you very much, then.

Before we turn to today's assignment we have to consider a few things occurring in the preceding section because we naturally devoted the time, all the time, last time to Aristotle's critique of Plato, and which we couldn't discuss sufficiently even then. Now there are two more blueprints which Aristotle discusses in book 2. One is by Phaleas,[ii] and one is by Hippodamus. Now Phaleas's notion was—do you remember, Mr. Strickland, the key idea of Phaleas, or the key conceit of Phaleas?

Mr. Strickland: That all disturbances within the society resulted from unequal distribution of property.

LS: And what does—do you remember what Aristotle says about that?

Mr. Strickland: He says that even if property were made equal, this does not get at the real problems, the real causes of disturbance, because there are at least two other causes of disturbance. These are lack of moderation on behalf of an individual; and seeking after

[ii] Strauss spells the name.

some kind of pleasure which is independent of any other kinds of pleasure, even philosophy . . .

LS: Now let us wait a moment. Now, you remember that in the section on Plato, Aristotle had made clear that private property is absolutely essential; and Phaleas takes up the question of property again and he makes a more specific suggestion regarding property, namely, equality of property, which means of course also equality of private property. Now Phaleas's suggestion implies a considerable interference with private property. For example, inheritance must be watched. A man cannot leave his property as he sees fit—and other kinds of interference with private property. That raised a question of principle: Is the legislator according to Aristotle entitled to interfere with property, to some extent to redistribute property? What would you say?

Mr. Strickland: I think he does say that it's all right to interfere.

LS: Sure. So in other words, Aristotle is in favor of private property, but he is not opposed to government interference with property. So his position is very different from that of modern economic liberalism. That should be clear, as it should have appeared already from the economic section in book 1, you know, which is not inspired by the spirit of Adam Smith. For example, one is the prohibition against selling one's estate, and that it goes down to the family and remains within the family is taken for granted. But the main point to which we referred is this: Aristotle questions Phaleas's principle that property is *the* cause of civil war and other civic unrest. How does he justify this criticism? Perhaps we read that. 1266b—do you have it?—b38, which means almost before the beginning of 1267a: men make rebellion not only because of inequality of property. Do you have that? I'm sure it's a new paragraph in Barker. Let me see.

Reader: Paragraph 10 on page 65.
This raises a further point: civil discord arises not only from inequality of property, but also from inequality of the offices which men hold. But here we must note a difference. The distribution of property works in the opposite way from the distribution of office. The masses become revolutionary when the distribution of property is *unequal*. (1266b38-40)

LS: Yes. Aristotle of course says only "the many." The term masses is itself a very interesting thing. I don't know when it came into general use; surely in the French Revolution it was *levée en masse* that was used, but it is not much older, I think, and I wonder whether it has not anything to do with modern physics—you know, mass; and the theological term, the mass of perdition, which as far as I know goes back to Augustine,[iii] does not have this meaning of mass. It has more—I mean, as a concentrated, powerful thing. The Latin word *massa* means originally something like dough—my pronunciation being so bad I spell it: d-o-u-g-h. So I really think it stems from physics. Aristotle simply says "the many." "Masses" would be an absurd expression in a Greek city. You know, there are four or five thousand men, or perhaps less who would be relevant. The many is clearer.

Reader:

[iii] Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace,* 12, 16, 25, and 26.

Men of education become revolutionary when the distribution of office is equal.—(1266b40-1267a1)

LS: No, when the distribution of offices—ya, when the honors are equal. In the one case, when the property is unequal the multitude is dissatisfied; when the honors are equal the gentlemen are dissatisfied.

Reader:
This is the point of the verse in Homer:

Office and honor are one and the same for the good and the bad man.

There are some crimes which are due to lack of necessities; and here, Phaleas thinks, equality of property will be a remedy, and will serve to prevent men from stealing simply through cold and hunger. (1267a2-6)

LS: In other words, you know in modern times this doctrine is quite popular. That is a part, if a subordinate part, in the Marxist argument. There is a part of the population which suffers very great need. They don't have the necessities of life and others live in plenty, and then the men in need rebel in order to get a redistribution of property. But Aristotle says that is only one cause for change. The other?

Reader:
But want is not the only cause of crimes. Men also commit them simply for the pleasure it gives them, and just to get rid of an unsatisfied desire. Vexed by a desire which goes beyond the simple necessities of life, they will turn criminals to cure their vexation. Men may not only commit crime to cure a desire they already feel: they may start some desire just in order to enjoy the sort of pleasure which is unaccompanied by pain. 1267a6-9

LS: Do you understand that difference? I mean, some want the mere necessities of life; that's one thing. And the others want things which are not necessary, and they are subdivided. The first class of non-necessary things are those who want to have more than the necessary things: big houses, parks, and what have you. And that is the reason why they commit crimes and consequently also political crimes: a change by virtue of which they come at the top and can milk the population. That's one thing. The others: what are the kinds of things which he means by this rather strange remark, "so that they enjoy the pleasures not accompanied by pains"? The first ones, who want to have wealth, these pleasures are not without pains, as you can easily see, because if you have wealth you have the pains of watching it and of ministering it, which is a great nuisance. But there are pleasures not accompanied by any pain, and they are of course the most desirable ones. Does anything occur to you—I mean, everyday experience, pleasures not accompanied by any pains? The bodily pleasures, however pleasant they may be, are accompanied at least by the pain of satiety, but there are pleasures where you cannot become satiated, nor do you have any pain like the pain of administering your wealth.

Student: Honor?

LS: That's a question, you know: you have to watch—look [at] these people running for office. [Laughter] No, even once they are in office. No, something very simple: I give you an example from Plato.[1] You just go, walk, and suddenly you smell, say, orange blossoms quite unexpectedly. There was no preceding desire. And you enjoy it, and it is not so that if it stops you are unhappy.[iv] This kind of thing exists. Now of course you can say these are—no one assassinates a ruler in order to—that's clear. But Aristotle, taking a broad view of the situation and trying to consider all kinds of motives, makes first the distinction between desire for necessities of life and desire for things which are not necessary. And here in the latter case he makes a subdivision: those luxuries which are necessarily accompanied by pain; and other "luxuries" which are essentially free from pain. And now let us see what he says about that.

Reader:
What is the remedy for these three kinds of crime? (1267a9-10)

LS: Well, "crime" is of course Barker's interpretation. Of course these three—how shall I say—illnesses, you could also say.

Reader:
For the first kind, we may answer, some modicum of property and some sort of work: for the second, a temperate disposition— (1267a10-11)

LS: Is this clear? In other words, the people who suffer from the necessities when they should have some property so that they don't [have] hunger and so on, and also work, you know, and so that they don't get funny ideas. And the second one[s], who want to have these big palaces. They should be, learn to become moderate in their desires: moral education. And the third?

Reader:
as for the third kind, we can only say that if there are men who want to get unmixed pleasures purely by their own independent effort, they will find no satisfaction except in the aid of philosophy— (1267a11-13)

LS: Ya. Now what has this to do [with that]? I mean, we are practical men and political scientists. What has this to do with that, this seemingly far-fetched thing. In other words, what Aristotle means is this. What we all know from the smell of a rose or [something] similar, or perfume, maybe: that on the highest level, in the most complete way, is philosophy. This affords pleasures much more intensive than those of perfume of any kind; and the perfume of the mind, one could say—and in addition [2]some other meaning apart from that pleasure [is] needed ultimately. Why does Aristotle refer to that here in a political book where we really speak about serious matters? You know? And Aristotle implies (and that will become clear from other passages) [that] we cannot reach full clarity about political things if we do not think of that . . . called philosophy as the highest of which man is capable, which in a way limits political society because political society as such is unable to philosophize. The *polis* cannot philosophize. And that is important to know, because we must not expect the highest satisfaction from the *polis*, from political life. If we have the highest expectation from the *polis*, then we will

[iv] Cf. e.g. Plato's *Philebus* 51e.

engage in visionary politics and will not get those solid goods which political life can procure. So it is impossible to clarify politics without having some understanding of the transpolitical. That is one occasion which Aristotle uses to refer to that. Yes?

Student: Well, isn't this inconsistent with the statement that the *polis* is in every way self-sufficient, both morally, and externally and physically? . . . philosophize outside of the *polis* . . .

LS: Can you? In what sense? Let us look at our friend Aristotle himself. Where did he live? Did he live in a desert? Did he live in some mountainous district without any conveniences whatever? Or where did he spend his life? A considerable part he spent in the city of Athens. Plato spent practically his whole life in Athens, and Socrates still more. So in other words, philosophy somehow needs the city—needs the city, because if everyone has to take care of all his needs in every respect he won't be able to think. There are needs of the body which must be fulfilled. And the problem is more complicated. One can say philosophy is not possible without the *polis*, and yet the philosophic activity is not a political activity. Does this make sense? One can also say the *polis* needs philosophy, as we shall perhaps see later on, and yet that again does not make philosophy a political or party affair. It's a complicated relation. I only wanted to show now why Aristotle is compelled to indicate from time to time, for example, at the beginning of book 7, but also other passages, to refer to philosophy. [There are] quite a few—we will cover of course certain passages in the third book where Aristotle suggests the perfectly satisfactory political solution. Every man would think, every sensible man dreams that that's the real thing. And Aristotle makes a question mark. The question mark is related to the fact that the solution has been reached in entire disregard of philosophy, and we must never forget that.

Well, I can give you a simple modern equivalent to the problem of Aristotle which makes it in a crude way more intelligible to you, but in a deeper sense makes it much more unintelligible, and that is culture. You know, culture in the sense of culture of the mind, which you use in the composite "culture vulture." This higher thing, which we somehow divine is higher than the political, that takes on for Aristotle the precise form of philosophy because the other things which are related to that, for example, poetry, is essentially subordinate to philosophy; and therefore poetry becomes a theme of Aristotle's *Politics*, as you will see in books 7 and 8. The *polis* has somehow to take care of poetry. It cannot take care of philosophy—a great problem up to the present day: all questions of censorship today are naturally affected by it. Academic freedom, as we say, is not quite the same thing as the freedom for everyone to write any novel or poem he pleases. I mean, maybe the two cases should be treated in the same way by the law, but that needs another argument, because the two cases are different. Well, we may take this up later when we come to what Aristotle says about censorship. Now let us go on. Whoever has it can continue.

Reader:
for all pleasures other than that of philosophy need the assistance of others.—
(1267a13)

LS: "Of other human beings." Ya.

Reader:
The greatest crimes are committed not for the sake of necessities, but for the sake of superfluities. Men do not become tyrants in order to avoid exposure to cold.— (1267a14-15)

LS: Is this clear? And that proves that the greatest crimes are not committed by men in need, because there are other ways of—smaller crimes are sufficient, like theft and so. But the biggest crime, high treason, establishing of tyranny, is not committed for this reason. And therefore Phaleas is wrong if he believes that the root of crime is need. That is not unimportant to mention today, because there are some people who really believe that need today—need, poverty and all that kind of thing are the causes of crime. They are occasions, but other things also give equally occasions. Yes?

Reader:
This is the reason why the honours paid to the man who assassinates a tyrant—and not a mere thief—are also great. We thus see that the general scheme of the constitution proposed by Phaleas avails only against the lesser crimes. (1267a15-18)

LS: Ya. So that's the completion of this. Now this is all I have now to say about the Phaleas section. Let us turn to the Hippodamus section, 1267b22. We might read the beginning here because that is a unique thing in Aristotle's work, as we will see.

Reader:
Hippodamus the son of Euryphon, a citizen of Miletus, was the first man without practical experience of politics who attempted to handle the theme of the best form of constitution. He was a man who invented the planning of towns in separate quarters, and laid out the Peiraeus with regular roads. In his general life, too, he was led into some eccentricity by a desire to attract attention; and this made a number of people feel that he lived in too studied and artificial a manner. He wore his hair long and expensively adorned: he had flowing robes, expensively decorated, made from a cheap but warm material, which he wore in summer as well as in winter; and he aspired to be learned about nature generally. (1267b23-31)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. Aristotle never again, either in the *Politics* or elsewhere, goes out of his way to describe the character of a thinker he criticizes. Apparently in this case it is very necessary to do so. You remember when at the beginning of this book he said we must study the earlier doctrines lest we be accused of ambition—what he only says in the political book. In political matters, these qualities of the individuals count; in a purely theoretical discussion, they are irrelevant. Now this was a man, the first man not engaged in politics who attempted to speak about the best regime. Since for Aristotle the question of the best regime is identical with political philosophy or political science, we can say Hippodamus was the first political philosopher, or the first political scientist, especially if we consider the fact, the other qualification: not engaged in politics. If someone engaged in politics thinks about the best regime, that's his business, in a way. But the man who is not actually engaged in political activity and yet thinks about the best regime, that is the theoretical man regarding politics, the political philosopher or political scientist. Now this first political philosopher or political

scientist was a strange fellow. He was a town planner in the first place, and then he was a fussy fellow. You know, some things would remind one of a Bohemian and other things would remind him of a kind of (how do you say?) snob. Is this a kind of snobbish thing? Certainly he wanted to show off, this much is clear. And then he also was a natural philosopher, in a way. He wished to be a man able to speak competently about the whole nature.

Now that is remarkable. Aristotle makes clear to begin with that he was a somewhat ridiculous figure, and this ridiculous character of Hippodamus indicates the problem of political philosophy or political science. And what is that problem? I mean, the basis was natural philosophy; and from natural philosophy he learned—that does not appear immediately from Aristotle, but from some other reports we have about that man—he believed he had found the key to all natural phenomena, and this key was the number three. Every thing, every being, proved to consist of three elements, three parts; and once you understood them, once you had the formula, you had understood it. And then he's trying to apply this natural science to politics, and he divides all political things: laws, or what have you, or the *polis* itself, into three parts as lucid as the natural science was. The result was utter confusion. That is the first form which political science or political philosophy takes on: a simple imitation of natural science, and some essential difference between natural things and political things is missed. A simplistic view of political philosophy or political science not limited, by any means, to Hippodamus, as is shown by the following fact: one of his suggestions is [that] the legislator ought to encourage inventions, innovations; the same spirit, in other words, which is at home in the sciences and arts—progress, progress necessarily then should also be at home in the *polis*. There is a perfect coordination of the *polis* and of science or knowledge, that view which in modern times was so powerful and triumphant and is known by the name of the Enlightenment. The society is subject to the same law to which science is subject, the law of progress; and therefore the most important part of the discussion of Hippodamus has to do with this problem. Is the *polis*, are the political things, and especially the laws of the same character as sciences or arts? By the way, there is this formula from Dewey: the method of democracy is identical with the method of intelligence.[v] However, the method of intelligence is of course the method in science. The democratic method is the scientific method. That is one version of this thought: there is no essential difference between political thinking and scientific thinking.

Now let us see how Aristotle discusses this point. Now we cannot read the whole thing, there are only a few points. I mention the main point. I'll state it in modern language: fundamentally the thought is the same. If you encourage inventions, you encourage, in our language, technological change. But how do you know that technological change will not lead to social change? Everyone would admit that. But now we come to the great problem: Will not social change also lead eventually to political change? And then can the statesman who is concerned with stability simply encourage inventions, i.e., technological changes? A very grave problem with which we live, if you think only—well, a point which Aristotle will discuss later, the crucial importance of military technology for political things. If you have civilization as it existed in the Middle Ages in Europe—and the Greeks had similar periods which they remember, where the nerve of the army was the cavalry, the knights—you had a rule of knights, feudal rule. In the moment infantry became the queen of battle, [a] more democratic regime emerged and this beautiful phrase, the

[v] See, e.g., John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935).

gat as the great equalizer[vi] is very revealing. Here this could be bought by practically everyone and handled by practically everyone; [it] established a very massive form of equality. And these military changes have had great political consequences. Now, do you see what happened in the meantime? This equivalence of a gun, and even of a machine gun, has faded absolutely in the age of these terrific super-weapons which can be handled only by a very small part of the population, and gives of course a tyrannical government infinite power. They can simply send over an atom bomb if need be, and then that settles the rebellion. Therefore these questions we must keep in mind. Yes?

Student: I was just wondering if a practical example of this in Aristotle might have been the, if I'm not wrong, the Athenian dependence upon light infantry after, I guess, 500 B.C. or so, when the fallen power of the heavily armed noble, in other words—

LS: The heavily armed were not the nobles; the heavily armed were the middle class and even lower middle class. No, no. The hoplites were still regarded by Aristotle in his time, the heavily armed soldiers, as the queen of battles. No, the problem to which I will speak later on in this book was created in Athens by the navy, because for the navy you needed people who did not have—and you preferred people who didn't have any property whatever because, you know, the rowing. And they acquired political power via the need for the navy. That's another trouble.

Now let us see. Aristotle says then first the case for change. We cannot read these extremely interesting passages, and I can only summarize them. We cannot read them for reasons of time; you should really read them. Now in Aristotle the case for political change is very simple. We find progress everywhere: look at the physicians in Homer, and look at a first-class contemporary physician (I mean, in Athens): what a difference. All kinds of things can be done, cured now, which were hopeless[3] in the time of Homer. And in gymnastics, and in what have you: progress everywhere. The principle is this: men in general seek not the inherited, the ancestral, but the good. The ancestral as ancestral has no claim to authority. They may have been old fogeys, as Aristotle says here. What we seek is the good and not the ancestral. That's a clear case for progress, you know, and that state of mind which you all know. But then he states the case against change, and that is more interesting because we are less familiar with that. Will you read that, in 1269a12?

Reader:
But while these arguments go to show that in *some* cases, and at *some* times, law ought to be changed, there is another point of view from which it would appear that change is a matter which needs great caution. When we reflect that the improvement likely to be effected may be small, and that it is a bad thing to accustom men to abrogate laws lightheartedly, it becomes clear that there are some defects, both in legislation and in government, which had better be left untouched. The benefit of change will be less than

---

[vi] Apparently a reference to the Gatling gun, invented in 1861. There does not appear to be a connection between this invention and the phrase "the great equalizer." A popular saying regarding Samuel Colt's invention of the six-shooter goes, "God created all men, but Sam Colt made them equal." Horace Mann called education "the great equalizer of conditions of men" in his 1848 report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education.

the loss which is likely to result if men fall into the habit of disobeying the government. We must also notice that the analogy drawn from the arts is false. (1269a15-20)

LS: Now listen carefully: law has a fundamentally different character from art or science—a fundamentally different character—and this was overlooked by the others. What is that?

Reader:
To change the practice of an art is not the same as to change the operation of a law. It is from habit, and only from habit, that law derives the validity which secures obedience. But habit can be created only by the passage of time; and a readiness to change from existing to new and different laws will accordingly tend to weaken the general power of law. (1269a19-25)

LS: Now let us stop; that is all we need. So that's the crucial point. To repeat it, literally translated: "for the law has no power whatever toward being obeyed apart from habituation or custom." That's the crucial sentence. That's a very paradoxical sentence, in a way. Does it not mean that the law derives no power whatever from its reasonableness, from its convincing character? Yes?

Student: What of the initial acceptance of law? Obviously, when a law is enacted, it is followed at first for some time. What is it then that—

LS: That is a point, but must it not have some correspondence to other habits already in existence?

Same Student: I meant it in this sense, that perhaps in the initial acceptance we find some of the other requirements involved.

LS: Ya, but let us assume that people were to begin with, in the remote beginnings, less intellectually active than they are in a more sophisticated age. Yes?

Student: Isn't this perhaps more an argument for incremental change rather than against change at all?

LS: Yes, sure. Surely, he's not against change at all. Aristotle is only against change, cautious change. Cautious change. What Aristotle says is as it were the burden of proof rests always on the changers, not on the preservers. But of course they may have a very strong case, the changers. Sure. Yes?

Student: Would Aristotle see a distinction between two different peoples, one of whom seems to be more law-abiding in general would tend to follow bigger changes in law than another people which has less respect for law in general, and therefore couldn't be trusted to accept fluctuations?

LS: Do you mean to say this, that a part of the population might very well be rationally convinced that this change is good, but not all. Do you mean that?

Same Student: No, I don't think so. What I meant was that, say, the English tend to be more—tend to obey laws because it's passed by Parliament or something even if it's new and in a certain amount of a radical nature, whereas another people with less experience in government might be much more upset by any change in their—

LS: Yes, that would amount to the same thing. If a high degree of rationality exists, laws can easily be changed. But the question is precisely—let us radicalize that. It would mean that the most rational men wouldn't need any laws. It is perfectly sufficient to prove to them that this is sound that they do it that way, then they do it. So the law is primarily addressed to those who do not follow reason. And therefore it would mean we must take for orientation a society which is not outstandingly rational, as the British in your hypothesis are.

Same Student: Well, this is not—I think you misstated what I was trying to say. I wouldn't agree that the British are necessarily more rational than anybody else, but rather—

LS: In one way, they are. [Laughter] I will give you an example later, but go on. [Laughter]

Same Student: My point is that it seems to me that an act of the British government, simply because it's an act of Parliament, may be followed more because the British people are used to obeying duly-constituted laws simply because they're duly constituted, not because of the rational content of the law; and that other people, who are less used to following laws simply because they are duly constituted, they tend to follow more . . . and therefore the British are in a better position to accept faster change because of the greater respect for the lawmaking process.

LS: Sure. But the problem is a very interesting one because it shows, to satisfy some among you, the obvious limitations of Aristotle's *Politics*. What I mean by that is this: Aristotle did not anticipate modern society, that's absolutely clear, and he did not know certain possibilities which developed in modern times. Now one of these possibilities is what we all know as the distinction between the constitution and the laws. This distinction has a slightly older origin (but not an Aristotelian origin by a long shot), and this older distinction, occurring in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, is that between fundamental laws and laws which are not fundamental. Out of that distinction proves the distinction between the constitution and the ordinary laws. Now once this distinction has sunk in deeply and the fundamental laws are not touched,[4] no conclusion regarding ordinary laws—regarding the fundamental laws follows from changes regarding the ordinary laws. Is this clear? Once you know, for example, Parliament is the legislating body and Parliament is elected in this and this way, that must not be changed by . . . Then the individual measures of Parliament, say, the individual laws, are not so terribly important. But that required a very great step. A very great step. Furthermore, regarding the distinction between constitution and the laws, the ordinary laws, you mustn't forget, not in the British theory—you know, which may not exist—but in those countries which have a more theoretical basis like this country and France and other countries, there is the notion: there is the sovereign people. The sovereign people gives itself first the constitution and then, derivatively,

the law. All legislation, in other words, is somehow self-legislation—although in practice it doesn't look that way frequently as we know, but that is at any rate the theory, then. Now all these enormous changes have molded the habits, the ways of thinking, of all of us. And Aristotle did not know that; he did not take it into consideration. Aristotle would be wholly objectionable and deserve to be thrown into the dustbin if he had not considered the *principles* of modernity and not the developments; and that he did, by implication. And that is—I mean, I cannot develop this now, we will have better occasions later.

But now I want to read to you two modern utterances, one American, one British, regarding Aristotle's problem. The first comes from the *Federalist* paper number 49, Hamilton or Madison: "If it be true that all governments rest on opinion it is no less true that the strength of opinion in each individual and its practical influence on his conduct depend much on the number which he supposes to have entertained the same opinion." In other words, in the language of Mr. Riesman, men are very much other-directed, and not only now.[vii] "The reason of man, like man himself, is timid and cautious when left alone." I suppose most of you know how unpleasant it is if you have an opinion different from everyone else you know on a matter of some importance, and that's really most uncomfortable and because, as Hamilton or Madison says: "The reason of man, like man himself, is timid and cautious when left alone, and acquires firmness and confidence in proportion to the number with which it is associated." The most absurd opinions become respectable if many people hold it. I mean, I do not want to give you some examples from social science because that would be unfriendly, but I know that a bit. "When the examples which fortify opinion are ancient as well as numerous, they are known to have a double effect. In a nation of philosophers, this consideration ought to be disregarded." You see, even the *Federalist Papers* must speak of the philosophers in order to make clear what they mean. "A reverence for laws[viii] would be sufficiently inculcated by the voice of an enlightened reason"—which would tell you (a) that you have to obey laws regardless, in the first place, because lawlessness is a much greater evil; secondly, which would show you in this particular law how reasonable that law is. Ya? How[5] reasonable that law is: take any of the niceties of the tax laws and then you will see what I mean. "But a nation of philosophers is as little to be expected as the philosophical race of kings wished for by Plato. And in every other nation, the most rational government [the most rational government—LS] will not find it a superfluous advantage to have the prejudices of the community on its side."[ix]

Now let us look at the arts. It would be absolutely fatal to any art, whether it is that of the shoemaker or that of the physician, that this would be based on prejudice. It would detract from its quality as an art. In the arts, instruction proper is necessary. The young apprentice of the shoemaker is *instructed* by the shoemaker: he tells him why to use this kind of needle and not that; why to prefer this material to that; and every action is rational. There is perfect rationality here, based on one premise: that man should wear shoes. That is no longer a problem for shoemakers, naturally. But still, you all have some access to a rational discussion of that problem. So in the laws, there is no instruction possible because the transmission of prejudices is not instruction. In the extreme case, when you say to a child: Do this, do not do that; or: A nice

[vii] See David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).
[viii] In Barker: "the laws"
[ix] *The Federalist Papers,* No. 49.

child will never do this, a nice child will do that, that is not instruction. That is a kind of training or however you call it, but it is not instruction because you cannot give a reason, and even if you give a reason that is in most cases not the sufficient reason because the child will not understand it. That is what Aristotle means, and that transfers over to grownups.

Now I read to you a British statement, and there you (let me see whether I find it)—and that occurs in Macaulay's *History of England*, in the third volume. Well, the edition which I have is so bad that I am not able to give the page. "Of all the Acts that have ever been passed by Parliament, the Toleration Act[x] [1695 or so?—LS] is perhaps that which most strikingly illustrates the peculiar vices and the peculiar excellences of English legislation. The science of Politics bears in one respect a close analogy to the science of Mechanics." This is the same problem which Aristotle has: the arts and laws.

"The mathematician can easily demonstrate that a certain power, applied by means of a certain lever or of a certain system of pulleys, will suffice to raise a certain weight. But his demonstration proceeds on the superstition that the machinery is such as no load will bend or break. If the engineer who has to lift a great mass of real granite by the instrumentality of real timber and real hemp should absolutely rely on the propositions which he finds in treatises on Dynamics, and should make no allowance for the imperfection of his materials, his whole apparatus of beams, wheels, and ropes would soon come down in ruin, and with all his geometrical skill, he would be found a far inferior builder to those painted barbarians who, though they never heard of the parallelogram of forces, managed to pile up Stonehenge. What the engineer is to the mathematician, the active statesman is to the contemplative statesman . . . The perfect lawgiver is a just temper between the mere man of theory, who can see nothing but general principles, and the mere man of business, who can see nothing but particular circumstances . . . in English legislation the practical element has always predominated, and not seldom unduly predominated, over the speculative. To think nothing of symmetry and much of convenience; never to remove an anomaly merely because it is an anomaly; never to innovate except when some grievance is felt; never to innovate except so far as to get rid of the grievance; never to lay down any proposition of wider extent than the particular case for which it is necessary to provide; these are the rules which have, from the age of John to the age of Victoria, generally guided the deliberations of our two hundred and fifty Parliaments. Our national distaste for whatever is abstract in political science amounts undoubtedly to a fault. Yet it is, perhaps, a fault on the right side. That we have been far too slow to improve our laws must be admitted. But though in other countries there may have occasionally been more rapid progress, it would not be easy to name any other country in which there has been so little retrogression. [But that was written a hundred years ago, and so. [Laughter] . . . come to the main point.—LS]

The Toleration Act approaches very near to the idea of a great English law. To a jurist, versed in the theory of legislation, but not intimately acquainted with the temper of the sects and parties into which the nation was divided at the time of the Revolution that Act would seem to be a mere chaos of absurdities and contradictions. It will not bear to be tried by sound general principles. Nay, it will not bear to be tried by any principles, sound or unsound. [Laughter] . . . But these very faults may perhaps appear to be merits when we take into consideration the passions and

[x] The Toleration Act of 1689 granted freedom of worship to Protestant non-conformists.

prejudices of those for whom the Toleration Act was framed. This law, abounding with contradictions which every smatterer in political philosophy can detect, did what a law framed by the utmost skill of the greatest masters of political philosophy might have failed to do. That the provisions which have been recapitulated are cumbrous, puerile, inconsistent with each other, inconsistent with the true theory of religious liberty, must be acknowledged. All that can be said in their defense is this; that they removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice . . . "[xi]

Now that is a modern British formulation, and very British—as you see also on this nice humor, you know, "not to be tried by any principles" and so on and so on, what Aristotle means, only Aristotle states it with classical simplicity and not this British humor. [Laughter]

Student: If this is true, how can the philosopher search for the . . .

LS: Ya. What is the difficulty . . .

Student: What I mean is that if the regime must be . . . too many prejudices . . . what is the purpose, what is the possibility of constructing a regime that would be independent of prejudices?

LS:[xii] In other words . . . I try to understand what you say. Let us assume that the best regime is the rational regime of a perfectly rational society . . . Then Aristotle would say a perfectly rational society is not possible, and therefore we have to seek a society which allows for the preponderance of . . . but in such a way that the rational rulers have the proper supplement in the less rational population. Let us take the extreme case . . . pure reason in the philosophers . . . And so they cure . . . in everyone else . . . And what do the philosophers do? . . . The others don't get anything of that. They are habituated by the philosophers or rather . . . who are kind of ministers to the philosophers . . . In other words, the perfectly rational society would be a society in which every member at least *can* be perfectly rational. You see what you have? That is a very important point. And our troubles today in political science are due to the fact that this notion, what some people call the classical theory of democracy—as the physicists speak of the classical theory of physics—the classical theory of democracy meant something like that: that the democracy is a regime in which every human being has rationality, can fully develop his reason. And therefore the true democracy would be a universal aristocracy: they are all gentlemen, and there is no longer a need for a gentleman class ruling the vulgar. All are gentlemen. Now when we read today, everyone—I mean, are you familiar with the present approach, especially by the more energetic people like Harold Lasswell and such?[xiii] Now they have abandoned that completely: That is visionary. That is visionary to expect that. The people are as selfish, as vulgar, as stupid as you can imagine, and that . . . in a democracy, and therefore all problems stem from the nature

---

[xi] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England* (London: Longmans, Green, 1866), vol. 2, chap. 11. Ellipses indicate that Strauss left out portions of the passage.

[xii] Strauss is standing at some distance from the microphone here, so it is difficult to make out much of what he says.

[xiii] Harold D. Lasswell, prominent political scientist and author of *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936).

of that. There is a beautiful formulation of . . . when he . . . in which he speaks of propaganda. That's it. You see, propaganda is the opposite of rationality, and propaganda . . . a rejection of the original doctrine of democracy. Aristotle stands somewhere between. He surely does not entertain the hopes of the classical doctrine of democracy. Perhaps . . . Nor does he have the self-satisfied cynicism of people like Lasswell. And our problem is really to reconcile the sober . . . of Aristotle with democracy. That is . . . [xiv]

—knowledge, "knowledge," which the citizen as citizen has and must have. It is not acquired by instruction proper, the instruction which you get at a university or which you get even in the shop of a shoemaker. I mean, from the point of view of present-day run of the mill social science, it's elementary what Aristotle says, because they say every society rests ultimately on certain . . . values, some also say on myths, and the relation between the two things is very obscure. All right, but then science is some such nonrational. If that is so, the basic training of the citizen, as we can say—how do they call it now, socialization? [Laughter]—is not a comical process. It is . . . [xv] Only Aristotle sees here a problem, you see, and what these people today do not see, and that is really the shocking thing, is that the old progressivist habits, ever greater enlightenment of the citizens, still persists and is frequently shared by identically the same social scientists who take this (how do you say?) conditioning view. I mean in present-day language the question of information versus conditioning. Everyone admits today that you need information, and this information must be true. Why do the foundations give these enormous millions to the social scientists except because they believe in the value of true information? At the same time the social scientist teaches that the basic orientation does not have the character of information but of conditioning, as they say; and the conditioning is a somewhat inhuman expression for what Aristotle calls habituation. Conditioning you can do even in an inanimate thing. Habituation, however, is to some extent possible for the higher animals, but much more so in the case of man, because habituation presupposes authority, and authority is—you know, in the case of the child, authority; and if you have a dog and train him that is not authority, strictly speaking, because the moral element of authority is absent; it's only fear and hope involved. So we must leave it at that, but you see this Hippodamus section is an extremely interesting section. And now we must turn—unfortunately we don't have much time—to the rest of the book.

The first section deals with Sparta, and in Sparta—that is very clearly divided; I mention this because I have not observed this earlier. We have first the economic characteristics; economic in the Aristotelian sense, the household, (a) slaves in the wider sense which means here the Helots, (b) women and (c) property. And the main theme are the women, who are most unsatisfactory in Sparta and he makes many remarks here about the fair sex which it is better not to read in class. And of course the question whether Aristotle is right and wrong here would lead to a dog and cat fight and we would . . . [laughter]. But the Spartan women had a very bad education. Don't forget the most famous of all Greek women, Helen, came from Sparta. Yes?

Student: Aristotle says that it's a well-known fact that martial nations or military men are controlled by their wives. Why was this a well-known fact?

[xiv] The tape was changed at this point.

[xv] Strauss moves closer to the microphone here and the audiotape becomes much clearer.

LS: I will give you an example . . . because they make it easy to rule . . . [Laughter] Aristotle says a martial people are more concerned with sex than a nonmartial people—not necessarily with women. He says either women or pederasts, and the Spartans chose, were more in favor of women, and consequently this presentation deals with women. And in addition, they . . . the men were away in wars. The women had much too much freedom and self-determination and . . . Yes?

Same Student: The sentence I was quoting reads: "the inevitable result, in such a constitution, is the worship of wealth, especially if—as happens with most military and martial stocks, the citizens are dominated by their wives."

LS: Yes, but that is here—is this the passage where he refers to Ares and Aphrodite? Is this the passage? Well, there is a reference to Ares and Aphrodite, to the God of war and the God of love, and that they were brought together by the ancient myth, and Aristotle thinks that myth was wise. The he-man has a peculiar attraction for women; you have read that in the literature, I suppose. Yes? And as we all do, and similar things. And Aristotle leaves it open; there is the alternative of pederasty that exists. But the more interesting point which is implied in your statement: Why are henpecked people—you know, henpecked men, why do they become, via their wives, lovers of wealth? That's the point. That doesn't make sense to you. [Laughter] Why? Because you think there is no difference in this respect between men and women: some are profligate, some are stingy and some are in between.

Same Student: I see. He's making an exception that there is a difference here between men and women as far as the desire for wealth is concerned.

LS: Yes, not necessarily for wealth, but for things which money can buy. [Laughter] I mean, you must have seen in some pictures a woman who wanted to have a hat, and it was perhaps an ugly hat but she was attracted by it, and no reasons taken from economics or morality or religion or aesthetics [laughter] could comfort [her]; and she was just lying down on a couch and trembling, or however you call that, because she didn't get the hat. Now men very rarely are—I mean, that is this school of literature to which I refer—men usually do not get so excited about a hat, if you know what I mean. And that applies to other. . . [Laughter] To bring it back to the perfectly appropriate level of literature where it belongs, don't forget that in Plato's *Republic*, book 8, where he discussed the perfect polity, or the perfect man, how is the son corrupted? By the mother.[xvi] You see this point: you know that in the mechanics of desire for external goods, the principle to keep up with the Joneses is said to play a great role. Have you heard of that? Good. Now it seems according to that old-fashioned school of writers that women are more influenced by the "keep up with the Joneses" principle than men. Now of course this needs many qualifications, and no lady in this room participates of these alleged vices, we all know that. But that is what Aristotle thought about it. Now but to speak more seriously, the older view of the difference of the sexes and the moral difference of the sexes was based on this principle: that the so-called biological function, of the different function of the two sexes, is bound to tell on any level, however high. You know? And therefore the desires, the perspectives, and what have you of women are bound to be affected. Not that women are less intelligent than men, you know, we

[xvi] *Republic* 549c-d.

have so many IQ's which refute that, but that the power of intelligence, especially in practical matters, over against a certain kind of passions was thought to be smaller in the case of women. I mean, the example of the hat—I mean, reason speaks against that hat; passion speaks for that hat. Now in the case of men, the passion can be better controlled in these matters. That is what Aristotle knew. Aristotle knew many greedy men, that's not the point; but it is also not wealth as wealth but the things which wealth, money and all can buy.

Now then he turns to the political institutions and discusses the ephors, the council of the elders, the kings, the common meals (because that's a political institution), and finally the admirals. Sparta got a navy very late, and therefore that new institution of the admiralty created a special difficulty. There is one point which was mentioned by Mr. Norton in his paper and I was surprised that he did not make some gloss on that, what Aristotle says about running for office, a very timely subject now. Can you repeat this statement?

Student: To have a regime that required a person actively to seek office is to encourage ambition and therefore crime.

LS: Ya, certainly a moral degeneracy. Do you know where the word ambition comes from? From the Latin word *ambitus*, to walk along, canvas. So the word ambition is derived from canvassing . . . But what do you say? Is this not an absurd principle of Aristotle? Is he not like a Victorian old lady?

Student: I think it's very obvious that ideally the office should seek the man; it just never does.

LS: Yes, but if it never does, Aristotle would be unrealistic—

Student: As a standard of a best regime, why it would in the best regime—

LS: Yes, but then you see, we must not use the standard of the best regime as a kind of box into which we put all unintelligible things. [Laughter] We must . . .

Student: It's perfectly intelligible, as you can see in a city like Chicago just about any misuse of ambition for honors and offices that you care to find.

LS: Yes, but the question is: Is the alternative, the prohibition against canvassing, not wholly unreasonable?

Student: No, it would not be wholly unreasonable.

LS: Under what conditions?

Another Student: He doesn't make it. He says the man who's best suited should have the office if he wants it or if he doesn't want it.

First Student: He praises the system in Carthage for the system of indirect elections.

LS: I don't know what you mean by "indirect."

Student: Election—just a second.

LS: By "indirect," do you mean by raising your hand?

Student: No, substantially nondemocratic, but selection by lot would be—had no relation to merit. I suppose you had to have a small community where people know each other . . .

LS: If people know each other it would be closer, but do you have any experience of your own where you can see . . . and that is not done?

Student: Surely, any organization you're in, you're likely to worry how to get the best person elected because there, very often he will not want the office.

LS: Well, take it . . . when I see . . . everywhere, the people who are fit, best fitted . . . don't want to become generally—without any hypocrisy. And that is so. Now let us generalize from that. While this statement doesn't make sense if you take a modern large society, it makes sense in smaller societies, in smaller societies of a certain level, because we must assume that a department has a higher level than most, the great . . . of union. So now if that is so, then we have already some help for the understanding. Perhaps these large societies, these tremendously large societies are by their nature prevented from developing a kind of excellence which was not impossible in smaller societies. And then we have to accept that "quote realistically unquote," and seek for another locus of excellence if it is true that a respectable society cannot be respectable without having some prohibitions, legal or nonlegal, for human excellence. That's the way in which I think one should read Aristotle. Good.

Student: Doesn't Aristotle criticize Plato on this point? He doesn't approve of the idea of the rulers not being active in the job . . . that they not seek office and don't want it?

LS: There is no . . . what Plato says. If one does not regard—I mean, if someone who wishes to rule, who wishes to rule . . . who is ambitious. There are cases . . . makes clear, there are cases in which a man says "I won't run" . . . But we have other means of distinguishing . . . So in other words, Aristotle is not unrealistic. He only took into consideration a different kind of society, and this different kind of society is not condemned by the fact that it does no longer exist as political society. It teaches us something about our political society which is of importance, at least for a proper analysis whatever the practical prospects may be. Yes.

Now there are a few more points I [will] take up here, and I limit myself to the most important points. Mr. Norton noted the fact that Carthage is not a Greek city. I mean, the three cities which are praised by Aristotle are Sparta, Crete (well, Crete is of course not a city, but the cities in Crete), and third, Carthage. Carthage was a Phoenician city, not a Greek city. And this disposes once and for all of the idiotic phrase occurring in so many textbooks: the Greek city-state. It is the city. That the city happened to be more common among Greeks than among non-Greeks is an

accident. The *polis* is a natural form of human association according to Aristotle for the reasons which he has indicated in book 1, and which will partly occur later. And Carthage is as good as—I mean, it's defective, but it is not more defective than Sparta. I do not want to go into certain subtleties there. But now when one reads Aristotle's criticism of these three famous regimes, one sometimes has the impression Aristotle is ironical, because what is the good of these three things? He hardly leaves anything. There may be some irony here, but it is not such a simple irony. What is the principle in the light of which Aristotle says that these three are the best of those which actually exist? Now Mr. Norton said the mixed regime. That Aristotle doesn't say, and even if he said it you would have to know the reason why mixed regimes . . . Aristotle gives a very simple statement of the principle in 1272b29 to 33. Well, that is at the beginning of the section on Carthage after he has made this statement, that these three regimes are close to one another and differ from the others considerably. The Cretan, Spartan, and the third of those, that of the Carthaginians. Now will you read that? 1272b29—whoever has that.

Reader:
It is a proof of a well-ordered constitution that Carthage, with her large populace, should steadily keep to the same political system: she has had no civil dissensions worth mentioning, nor any attempt at a tyranny. (1272b30-33)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. These are the criteria. Now the first point: no rebellion, no civil wars, no such bloody dissensions. The first criterion is stability, and the second criterion is no tyranny. Now let me translate the latter by a positive formula: stability and freedom. These are the two criteria. What is the use of a free regime which is absolutely unstable? . . . What is the use of a regime which is one hundred percent stable but in which you can't breathe without permission by the authorities? In other words, it's really commonsensical, the criteria: stability and freedom. Needless to say that Aristotle does not understand by freedom that high degree of license without which we couldn't live a single day. That's another matter—well, we come to that later. But it has something in common with what we mean by freedom. These are the commonsensical criteria, stability and freedom; and he says that is the preserve of these three. Now before we jump off and say how absurd, let us consider the most famous example which comes to our minds and with which Aristotle was familiar. What about Athens? Was it not a free city, freer than Sparta, and surely than Crete? What about stability? How many changes of the Athenian constitution within one generation? Read only Aristotle's own account in his so-called *Constitution of Athens*. So Athens would not be an example. There were not others—yes?

Student: I wanted to—I'm interrupting, but I wanted to raise this point: How does he reconcile Crete with this, in Crete he emphasizes civil dissensions and he said the complete breakdown of the system only as an island, because it's an island . . .

LS: That is quite true, but still it is so. You can say this: Crete as described by him reminds of the Middle Ages, in the later part of the Middle Ages, and also of Poland, you know . . . In other words, a high degree of lawlessness and so, but it was still the regime as such lasted. You see, there is a difference. For example, take this, a contemporary example. You have these constant changes of governments in Italy, and you have it in France. Still, that is very bad and of course the causes of that are worse—

Same Student: They don't have stability, but still he says, in so many words, it seems to suffer from time to time from tyranny and faction—

LS: But that is not technically precise. In other words, certain organs of that regime took very great liberties, but the regime as such wasn't disturbed. Now if someone would say there are other Greek cities, for example, which Aristotle knew, which were better than these regarding the two criteria of stability and freedom—for example, that island of Chios which is praised so highly by Thucydides—Aristotle has a very simple and commonsensical reason. He speaks only of the most famous ones. Whether there was a wonderful island somewhere is irrelevant. It is of course not unimportant from other points of view, but when we speak politically about big models we legitimately disregard that. So that the procedure for Aristotle is really sensible. Now this point, stability, must be interpreted and then you see that he doesn't mean quite the same thing that we mean; he means especially by that no popular unrest. The *dēmos*, the common people, is tolerably satisfied. That is the practical meaning of stability. In other words—and now I bring out the anti-democratic element—the proper subordination of the *dēmos*. Now they must be reasonably docile. Therefore there is another expression for what Aristotle means; I mean the standard which guides him in all these critical analyses, that he would appeal to every politically experienced man, and say: Well, don't you want these two things, stability and freedom? That's my criterion. The fuller elaboration leads indeed into that best regime which, if fully elaborated, will no longer be the box—you know, the *pons asininus*.[xvii]

There is one more passage which I think we should read and that is in 1273a25 to the beginning of b. That is this great question of wealth, and some of you smiled when Mr. Norton gave his report, and Aristotle seems to do some pettifogging there because Aristotle insisted all the time in his critique of Carthage especially that people must be elected with a view to virtue or merit and not with a view to wealth. And now the unfortunate trouble is that these things are not so easily separable, are not so easily separable, because certain virtues cannot be practiced except by wealthy people. For example, munificence: Who can make big gifts to the city: a beautiful temple . . . not a poor man. And also there is another practical danger: the treasury. It is unfortunately so that the inclination to embezzle (there are perhaps nicer words for that) or to relieve themselves of a momentary need by some loan which they will pay back the next first when they will get then, and it is greater for a needy man than for a wealthy man. And therefore it was even in Athens a practice; even in democratic Athens you elected wealthy people for treasurers, just as you elected notoriously brave men for generals. That was the end of—you didn't elect those officials by lot . . . Now what is that? Do you have that passage? [1273a25], paragraph 9, on page 85. Do you have it? Read it.

Reader:
If election on the ground of means is characteristic of oligarchy and election by merit of aristocracy— (1273a26-27)

[xvii] Euclid's fifth proposition was often referred to as the *pons asininus* or bridge of asses, as it is the point at which many students got stuck, daunted by the challenge of proceeding further.

LS: That is crucial—I mean, that I must briefly explain. The democratic principle simply is to elect anybody without any regard to any other fact except that he is a citizen. That's clear; and the technical form of getting that is election by lot, because then you cannot consider anything but the fact that he is a citizen. If you consider merit—without any regard now to the difference between genuine or spurious merit, but if you consider merit in principle as we are supposed to do in a modern democracy, that is an aristocratic principle. And if you consider wealth, as wealth, that's an oligarchic principle. Is this clear? That is what Aristotle here presupposes.

Reader:
If election on the ground of means is characteristic of oligarchy and election by merit of aristocracy, the system on which the Carthaginian constitution is formed would seem to be something different from either. Both grounds are taken into consideration in the elections of magistrates at Carthage, especially in those of the highest—the kings and the generals. This deviation from the pure principle of aristocracy must be regarded as an error— (1273a26-31)

LS: You see here that is another point which Aristotle presupposes as something which every sensible man would grant him, just as every sensible man would grant him that you need both stability and freedom. And the other sensible principle concerns the rulers: Who should rule? Of course, the men fittest to rule, most fit to rule, the best men. In this sense, aristocracy. Aristotle doesn't argue that. He thought that everyone who is not blinded by prejudice or doesn't have an axe to grind would admit that.

Reader:
This deviation from the pure principle of aristocracy must be regarded as an error of the original law-giver. It is one of his initial and greatest duties to see to it that the most meritorious are in a position to enjoy leisure time—not only when they are in office, but even when they are not—and to refrain from occupations which are unworthy of their gifts. In any case—and even admitting that it may be right to take means too into consideration, in order to secure men of leisure—we may still criticize the Carthaginian practice of making the highest offices (those of the kings and the generals) open to simple purchase. A rule of this nature puts riches in a more honorable position than merit, and imbues the whole of the state with a spirit of avarice. The values attached to things by the heads of the state will necessarily determine the opinion of the rest of the citizens; and a constitution in which merit does not receive the highest place of honour is one in which aristocracy cannot have a secure existence. (1273a31-b2)

LS: All right, let us stop here. Now do you see the point which I—in other words, that the most meritorious men, the most fit men, because you need not only cleverness and proficiency; that is not enough, you need also some moral qualities, at least justice or fairness and some other moral qualities. So then the virtuous men should rule. Virtuous doesn't mean (how shall I say?) weak-headed decent fellows, as some modern men are likely to understand that, because weak-headedness is of course a vice, a defect, [but] intelligence and moral virtue. So we will elect such people. But such a man might be a poor man: Socrates. So what do we do? Well, you know what we do. We pay them salaries if they are presidents, or we pay them salaries even if they are

representatives of the people and, in our sense, congressmen. Yes, but does this not bring in a slightly disreputable element, that it becomes a job for gaining a livelihood and not a public trust? Is there not a certain element of indelicacy? So Aristotle says therefore one should try to do that those who are most promising to become fit men, fit for rule, that they should live in such a position that they should have some competence independently of their office so that there is no necessity for them in any way to run for office in order to live.

There are other reasons why Aristotle says so, for example, because leisure is absolutely necessary for developing the mind, and leisure is not possible without some competence. And of course you can get leisure through foundations, as we all now know, but first of all that's a more recent development, and I have seen some cases where students were very glad if they had a couple of thousand dollars for themselves and did not have to be dependent on foundations—you know, that can have all kinds of difficulties. So in other words, Aristotle, what he has in mind, and that is crucial for the whole book: the ruling people, this rational stratum, the gentlemen or however you call them, must be men of independent means. And here a great difficulty arises. Whether a fellow is wealthy or not can very easily be seen, generally speaking, but whether he is virtuous and wise is not so easily seen, at least not by everybody; you must have some degree of intelligence to recognize virtue and wisdom, a higher degree of intelligence than to see that he is wealthy because even the greatest fool can know if he is wealthy if he has access to the banking account of that man and to his tax sheet, you know? That's not so difficult.

And therefore a difficulty arises: Will the rulers not be in fact wealthy men? That we know; whether they are virtuous men we do not know. Now Aristotle makes therefore some qualifications to make the clarity. In the first place, he distinguishes between various kinds of wealth. Which kind of wealth is most conducive to intelligent public-spiritedness? And his sole answer is a certain kind of gentleman farmers are better than merchants and industrial people. Then he takes another point which is more important: education. Even if these people are originally nothing but lucky fellows and they were sons of wealthy fathers, if the education of this ruling stratum is proper, at the end of this educational process they will have acquired some fitness to rule which those who have not become educated this way will surely miss. Well, we will comment on that later. The Aristotelian argument—I mean, Aristotle starts from certain elementary verities which we do no longer know because of that radical change in the conditions of men, modern life. The tacit premise of Aristotle everywhere, and not only of Aristotle but of everyone up to a certain time, is scarcity. Scarcity. It is impossible to have a society in which all members of the society are properly educated. It's physically impossible, and hence the question arises:[6] how to select in the fairest way those who should get the highest education—and the problem in Plato's *Republic* too. In practice—I mean, if we disregard that visionary solution of the *Republic*—in practice, it will not work without a certain arbitrariness, without a certain injustice, if you please. That is true. That is a problem. That is one reason why the human problem cannot be solved entirely by political means, because this cannot be helped, this basic difficulty.

Now one last point. In his survey at the end of the book, Aristotle speaks of a number of men who were either legislators for a given regime or even established the regime at the same time, and the most important part of course there is the section on Solon, the Athenian legislator. Aristotle defends him, defends Solon against the charge that he originated, God forbid,

democracy. What he did was a perfectly decent thing, Aristotle says, in which the people had that share in power without which they cannot possibly be in sympathy with the regime: the right to elect and the right to audit the magistrates after their term of office. And here he gives one of these historical explanations which are so eminently sound and which of course doesn't stem from him: that it was the Persian War and the crucial role which the navy acquired there under Themistocles—an accident, and not Solon's planning, which accounted for the emergence of democracy in Athens.

I think I must leave it at that. Next time, I repeat, Miss Flaumenhaft, you read the paper, and Mr. Cantorini . . .

Session 6: April 14, 1960
The citizen; the *polis* as association

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —revolutionary constitutional change. Is this not a slightly awkward expression? I mean, wouldn't the ordinary understanding be that a revolutionary change is not a constitutional change, and vice versa?[i]

Student: . . .

LS: Ya. So it's good to think of these little things. Well, that's trivial. Now you made one point which is more important: there is no new *polis*, you said, where the constitution does not change. Ya, but I think that is not what Aristotle means. For example, you have a *polis*, say, in New England—a town, and this town migrates to California, bodily. Is it the same *polis* according to Aristotle?

Student: . . .

LS: No. I mean I think, for example, if say Middlebury becomes New Middlebury in California, it is a new *polis*. So that the conditions are very important, and also, well, we will discuss that when we come to that. I didn't understand two remarks which you made. You spoke of the connection between the question, should an artisan be a citizen and the question regarding the difference between the good citizen and the good man, or the relation between good citizen and good man. What's the connection between the two questions? Aristotle raises the question: Is the good citizen identical with the good man? And in this connection, he raises the question: Should an artisan be a citizen? What's the connection?

Student: Well, the connection is the good citizen a good man—you can have a *polis* where a man can be a good citizen, and yet the *polis* is not a good *polis*; it's not according to the proper end of a *polis*.

LS: Meaning that more precisely . . . artisan . . .

Student: Well, in a good *polis* the artisan would not be a citizen. … Well, he points to the fact that it's possible to make an artisan a citizen, but he can't really participate because—well Aristotle isn't explicit, but I imagine because of the time and all that sort of thing, he can't really participate.

Different student: Well, I think he says that the type of obedience or the kind of subject that the artisan has to be is not the same type of virtue as the citizen has to be in his double capacity as citizen and subject, or the same type of knowledge that . . .

LS: Yes, that is so, but it is not clear enough just as Mr. . . .'s remark is not clear enough. Yes?

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Student: I think that what Aristotle says is that only at one point does the good citizen become a good man, and that's when the good citizen rules and also is able to obey, and he says that the mechanic isn't able to get into a ruling position . . .

LS: That is not simple enough. It is relevant, but not clear enough.

Student: The good man can be a good man by following his nature; and this nature may not allow him to be a citizen, he is not fitted to be a citizen . . . he has . . .

LS: You don't catch the full thought. The mechanic—yes?

Different Student: The mechanic has to rule his passions all the time . . . virtues . . .

LS: Yes, that is related to it, but still the main point is very simple. Aristotle, I think, states it explicitly. The artisan cannot be a good man, but he may be a good citizen under certain conditions. That's the connection. He may be a good citizen in a democracy, that is the central point. Now the last point: you say Aristotle divides the constitution first according to number, although number is accidental as he himself points out. Why does he start from number in your opinion, although it is accidental?

Student: There are several possibilities. One is that the thing that first presents itself when you first look at the situation is that it is number; in some cities, the many rule—

LS: That is good enough to begin with, ya. I mean, it is not quite sufficient but it is the central point. All right. Now let us then turn to the third book. Next time, Mr. Hurst will read it.

Now I would like to make one brief remark regarding the second book of the *Politics* which we discussed hitherto. Now the sections dealing with blueprinters, i.e., Plato, Phaleas, Hippodamus, I think must be regarded as *the* key to a sensible history of political philosophy. In the history of philosophy generally speaking, everyone still follows the outlines of the history given by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, first book of the *Metaphysics*, and the reason is that Aristotle was so highly competent—he of course also knew many writings which have been lost, but the main point is that he was such a remarkable analyst of these philosophies. Now on the basis of this experience it is wise to give Aristotle the benefit of the doubt also regarding political philosophy; and when he says these three men of very unequal rank, Plato, Hippodamus and Phaleas, are the important people to consider as far as the question of the best regime is concerned, then we can be sure that there are no others worthwhile. I mean, it would be unreasonable to have any other suspicion. Now in the conventional history of political philosophy that is of course denied, and there is especially one phenomenon which plays a great role; I believe this ghost has also made its appearance in this class on a former occasion: the so-called sophists. You know, you must have heard of them. Well, Aristotle doesn't speak of them at all here. He does mention them at the end of the *Ethics*. They had something to do with politics, but they were not political philosophers in any strict sense of the term because they did not raise the question of the best

regime. Aristotle says the sophists were people who practically identified political science with rhetoric, and I think we have no choice but to believe him.[ii]

Now what is the idea underlying this identification or quasi-identification of political science and rhetoric? Here we recognize an element of truth in the conventional view. These sophists seem to have taught, all of them, that the *polis* and all politically relevant things, the just and the noble things, are conventional, are merely conventional. Now if that is so, it followed, contrary to the modern view, that this is something very low, very despicable, because only what is natural has an inherent necessity and dignity. So what is merely conventional—think of the extreme case of money: whether you coin dollars or pounds sterling is a purely arbitrary decision—that is not respectable; [it is] a mere convenience, and no serious man would be terribly interested in that. But still you have to live with them in a city. What is the conclusion? You use these conventions for your private convenience. The others, the fools regard them as terribly important; you, an enlightened man, do not but you have to use them. Now what is the way of using them? What is the art of using these conventions? Answer: rhetoric. There is a certain notion of justice prevailing: merely conventional; but these conventions are enforced and so if you want to live happily in that city you have to pay some external respect to them, and the external respect is that you argue on the basis of them when you are accused, or when you accuse someone else and similar things. So that is the connection. And this is of course not—the theoretically interesting thing in these doctrines is the assertion that all noble and just things are merely conventional. But that is only the presupposition and that in itself doesn't make a political philosophy; and I would go beyond it and say that this assertion in itself is not a peculiarity of the sophists but stems from certain pre-Socratic philosophers. The notion of sophist as used in the last hundred fifty years or so, roughly since Hegel, is a convenient myth and not based on sufficient evidence. But this only in passing. So it is much wiser to take the second book of the *Politics* as the key to the understanding of classical political philosophy.

Now let us turn to the third book and begin at the beginning. The third book, and especially the section which we discuss today (although we may need part of the next meeting for the discussion), is *the* central part of the *Politics*. The fundamental considerations occur here. Now let us read the first sentence: "He who looks at polities," let me say, "and what each polity is and what character each of them has—for him the first thing to look at is to look regarding the *polis*: what a *polis* is."[iii] You see, this is a very important statement. Aristotle makes clear here one thing: his primary theme is not the *polis*. He studies the *polis* because you cannot understand the polity without understanding the *polis*. The polity is the theme. Well, polity—in Greek, *politeia* [LS writes on the blackboard], *politeia*—and that is, by the way, the title of Plato's *Republic*, *Politeia*, and which I'll translate as regime, which is not a wonderful translation but the best I know and someone will perhaps find another one on another occasion. And so I will now use the word "regime," and later on Aristotle will explain to us what that means.

So the regime is the first thing, and the *polis* is interesting only because we are interested in the polity. He who wants to find out about the polities, or the regimes and which each is somehow will know there are many regimes, i.e., many kinds of regimes, and also of what character or

[ii] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1181a12-15.
[iii] Strauss's translation.

quality it is, which means also and most importantly the good or bad, the just or unjust ones. So in other words, the question of the most just regime, the best regime, is really the guiding question, from which we turn to the question of the *polis*. But perhaps it is not a question, what a *polis* is. Everyone knows this. Why is this *polis* a question, a problem? That he says in the next sentence: "For at present." Do you have it? "For at present they are of different opinions. Some people say the *polis* has done the act, and others say no, not the *polis* but the oligarchy or the tyrant."[iv]

Now oligarchy and tyranny are forms of the regime, and here we see the difference between *polis* and regime in practice. Someone says, The *polis* did it; and others say, No, the regime did it. Now take an example: Some say, Germany did it; others say, No, the Nazis did it. The distinction is immediately intelligible to you. That's what Aristotle means. The *polis* never exists without an order, without a regime; and yet this necessary distinction is in practice always obscured necessarily. That's the problem. We will gradually recognize very familiar phenomena behind this seemingly abstruse distinction. The first who say in this case, we could say: The *polis* is identical with the regime. And others say there's a difference. At any rate, the problem of the *polis*, the difficulty of finding out what the *polis* is, is connected with the problem of the regime, for the question concerns the relation of *polis* and regime. Who are the people who say: No, not the *polis* did it but the oligarchy or the tyrant did it? What kind of people are they? Let us talk as political people, I mean, and not as abstruse speculators. Who are the people who will say that?

Student: . . .

LS: The democrats, of course. I mean, let us not fool ourselves about these nice things, aristocracies and so on; but in crude practice you find tyrannies, oligarchies and democracies, and perhaps in rare cases some ones which are much better, and aristocracies, but that is a very subtle thing; to begin with, crudely we have these alternatives. The democrats say that. Now we draw from this a conclusion that the distinction between the *polis* and the regime is primarily a democratic distinction, and we will find other examples of the same kind. The *polis*, we may say, has in itself a democratic bias. Aristotle admits that. He thinks that's a bad bias; that's another matter. But the *polis* is somehow tending to be democratic. In an earlier passage, in 1259b4 to 6, we have seen the *polis* "tends to be a society of equals and free." That is so, and Aristotle sees—now, but what does it mean from Aristotle's point of view? Since Aristotle rejects democracy or regards it as bad, what does this fact mean that the first clarification begins here as well as later on when he speaks of the citizen with a democratic notion? Well, that political philosophy—what Aristotle is doing—emerges in a democracy. That is not entirely an accident. In an old-fashioned stable aristocracy, there is no need for political philosophy, but in the moment of conflict and tension and all kinds of decay, there political thought arises; and therefore it takes its starting point from what is given first, is given immediately. But what is given is a democratic order, and the clearest example is of course Athens. Athens is the home of political philosophy: a democracy.

Now how does he go on, where we left off? "We also see that the whole business of the statesman and legislator is about the *polis* and the regime is some order of those who inhabit the

[iv] Strauss's translation.

polis."[v] Now in a sense the *polis* is primary, because what is the statesman and legislator occupied about: with the *polis*, not with the regime; and furthermore, that also shows the apparently secondary character of the regime. The *politeia*, the regime, is some order of the inhabitants of the *polis*. First you have the inhabitants of the *polis*, and then you have the regime; but the inhabitants of the *polis* in a way presuppose the *polis*. We shall later on see that there is some element of truth in it, that the *polis* comes first and the regime afterward, but this truth is not true enough, as Aristotle is going to say. Well, then Aristotle concludes that we must therefore find out what the *polis* is; and therefore, the *polis* being a composite, we decompose it into its elements. And what are the elements beyond which—which are no longer divisible? The citizens. Because if you divide the citizens you come into politically irrelevant distinctions. I mean, think of what happens if you are cut into parts. You are dead. And a dead man is not a part, a possible element of the *polis*. Or if you make an intellectual division between, say, soul and body, that is in a way also politically irrelevant, because we need embodied souls as citizens. If we go beyond that we cease to speak about the political things. Yes?

Student: If you draw an analytical distinction between *polis* and regime, then isn't citizen primarily a component of regime and therefore man would be primarily a component of the *polis*?

LS: Ya. Sure, you can say that, but let me state it differently. How did Aristotle proceed in book 1? You remember in book 1 he did in a way exactly the same thing that he did here: to go back from the *polis* to its elements. But what were the elements there?

Student: Associations.

LS: Associations. In other words, he never goes back to the mere individual, because as mere individual that would be politically unenlightening. The associations are politically enlightening—the family, the village, and what have you—but the mere individual is not. There is another reason: he could—and that is crucial, I think, and shows you the subtle procedure of Aristotle. By dividing the *polis* into the associations, he arrived at a better understanding of the *polis* without any reference whatever to the phenomenon of regime. By dividing the *polis* into the citizen and finding out immediately that the citizen is relative to the regime, the regime comes in immediately.

You have a beautiful nineteenth-century equivalent to that. In the nineteenth century, last half of the nineteenth century, political philosophy was frequently called theory of the state. *The* state. What kind of state? What kind of regime? That was not clear from the question. Now what Aristotle does in book 1: the *polis*, without any reference to regime, reminds externally of a theory of *the* state, a theory of *the* polis. But now he tells us that we cannot possibly speak of the *polis* without speaking first of the regime; and the way in which he proceeds is this. We are concerned with the regime. Somehow we know that, and you will see later on that Aristotle is dead right in what he says. We cannot talk about politics today without taking into consideration, into primary consideration such things as democracy and communism. That is what he means. If you don't talk on political matters in the light of such distinctions, you do not talk politically;

[v] Strauss's translation.

you may do something else but that's no longer politically. So that, everyone knows. But then we have to go back to the condition of any possible difference of regimes; that's the political association as such: the *polis*. All right, but the *polis* is a composite so we go back to the elements of the polis: the citizen. And what do we meet again? The regime. We cannot avoid the fact that the political is the politically relevant, the politically controversial. There is the neutral; there are certain neutral things in politics. Aristotle speaks somehow of them, but they are not strictly speaking political; they are technical, in our language. And the common usage, when people say in accusation: "That is politics," they understand something of politics. Politics does have this controversial, at least potentially controversial character, which the merely technical as technical does not have. What is your difficulty?

Student: I was—this may seem somewhat naïve, but if this is what you said earlier about reducing the *polis* to its elements being associations, then why does he contrast—it seems to me when he contrasts the good citizen with the good man, he doesn't speak of the good man in the context of a lesser association. He seems to speak of good man, but isn't he returning then to a—

LS: To what? To the village or family?

Student: No, to man. That's it, man out of association. Man as he stands unassociated.

LS: Yes, but the good man as he is understood here is essentially a political being. We will see that. Let us proceed step by step. So what is the citizen? That is our question. And then Aristotle disposes at the beginning of 1275a of a variety of irrelevant things. Now this is a beautiful specimen of Aristotle's precision and sobriety. Unfortunately, we cannot read it; we have to stick to the nerve of the argument. Such nice questions: for example, what is the status of a boy? A boy, the son of [a citizen, is] a future citizen. Well, a future citizen is not a citizen simply, because you have to add this qualifier: a future citizen. And also other things into which we cannot go.

Now then Aristotle gives first the definition of the citizen and defines him: the citizen is a man who participates in judging and in ruling. In judging and in ruling. Is there any difficulty? Yes?

Student: Aristotle says in book 2—Aristotle says that in a good regime . . .

LS: And subjects?

Student: . . .

LS: Well, let us go step by step. Does it make sense? I mean, after all, we talk about citizens all the time. Does it make sense to say the citizen is the man who participates in judging and in ruling? Yes?

Student: Could that sentence be changed to the man who participates either now or at some time in judging and ruling?

LS: That—he will come to this difficulty later. Because after all—yes?

Student: In his discussion of this Aristotle considers the offices that each citizen must hold, the ones who judge and rule, and he mentions officials of the state, I think, and then he gives as an example people who sit in courts, either as people on the jury or judges. Would somebody who votes also be considered as one who participates—

LS: I'm trying to come to this point where we find a modern analogon. Now Aristotle first changes it a bit and says a citizen is a man who participates in judging and in the popular assembly. Now here you recognize modern democratic things immediately: a citizen is a man who can become a juryman and who can vote; or let me say a citizen is a man who can elect and can be elected to office—both. If he only elects, that's too little; he must also be entitled to be elected to office. From this we can draw the interesting conclusion, which is perfectly in the spirit of Aristotle, that a naturalized citizen according to the law of this country cannot become a president, as you know, and therefore he is null; he's a citizen with a qualification. A naturalized citizen is not a full-fledged citizen, a hundred percent citizen, because he is legally prevented from being elected to the highest office.

So in other words, we recognize certain things here which we know, although things have very much changed, as you know, chiefly because of the introduction of representative government. We do not think of the citizen as participating in government, in ruling, in the way that's not so evident to us as it was in olden times, where you had only direct democracies or other direct forms of government. So Aristotle gave a definition, then, to repeat: a citizen is a man who can participate in judging and in the assembly. Now as to your question, of course he doesn't participate literally always. He has to sleep, he has to eat. In other words, he participates whenever the assembly meets, whenever the jury meets; and since you have to arrange for some conveniences you cannot have all 1500 or 2000 or citizens [be] jurymen at the same time. Therefore you divide them up either according to parts of the city, or according to the law cases, or whatever other division may seem to be convenient. Now let us come to a passage which is rather difficult, at first glance at any rate, and that is 1275a33 following. Do you have that? That the best definition, more or less, is roughly of this kind. Yes?

Reader:
Such is the general nature of the definition of citizen which will most satisfactorily cover the position of all who bear the name. Citizenship belongs to a particular class of things where (1) there are different bases on which the thing may depend, (2) these bases are of different kinds and different qualities—one of them standing first, another second, and so on down the series. Things belonging to this particular class, when considered purely as so belonging, have no common denominator whatever—or, if they have one, they have it only to a meagre extent. Constitutions obviously differ from one another in kind, and some of them are obviously inferior and some superior in quality; for constitutions which are defective and perverted (we shall explain later in what sense we are using the term "perverted") are necessarily inferior to those which are free from defects. It follows that the citizen under each different kind of constitution must also necessarily be different. We may thus conclude that the citizen of our definition is particularly and especially the citizen— (1275a33-b7)

LS: Now let us stop here. Let us stop here. So the first point which Aristotle makes is: citizen is relative to the regime. I mean, Barker always translates [regime], as I think everyone does, constitution, which is really a misleading word, and let us then simply say regime instead of that. So Aristotle, to repeat, says the citizen is relative to the regime. Why does he make this terribly complicated remark, this metaphysical remark or the logical remark, however you call it, about these various kinds of thing? Now first let us try to understand the content of it. There are things in which the bases, as Barker translates, the substrata differ in kind. Now what does this mean? A simple example is feathers of birds. Feathers have substrata, namely, the birds; and the feathers differ in kind: the feathers of an eagle are not the feathers of a hen. There is an essential difference between them. They are feathers, but the substrata differ in kind. That's one kind of thing. And then he says[1] regarding the bases: There may be two relations: either the bases have nothing in common—that's the extreme case; or they have a proper order. Now in the case of the feathers of birds you cannot speak of an order: you cannot say the feathers of an eagle are more [or] to a higher degree feathers than the feathers of a pigeon. That's an intermediate case. Aristotle limits himself to the extreme case.

Now what is the case where the substrata have nothing or hardly anything in common? A case would be the hand: you have a hand, of a man; you have a hand cut off; and you have a painted hand. All three are hands somehow. But only the first is a real hand. The other is no longer a hand: the hand cut off still has the shape of a hand, but it can no longer exercise the work of a hand and therefore is not a hand unqualifiedly, or "absolutely," as he translates. You see, what Aristotle means by absolute has nothing to do with fantastic German Idealism; it means simply without qualification. That's a hand; I don't have to qualify it. But if it is wounded, then it is qualified: a wounded hand or a dying hand. The hand cut off is no longer a hand. And the painted hand is a reflection into two-dimensionality of what is really three dimensional, even in the case of a cut-off hand. So they have nothing in common to speak of; and what is the case but that there are other cases in which the substrata differ in kind and the substrata have an inner order of rank, and that is here the case: the citizen has as his substratum the regime. That must be properly understood. The citizen is always relative to the regime. He can only be understood in terms of the regime. So the substrata of citizens are regimes, but[2] the various regimes are not equal in rank as the feathers of the various species of birds; nor do they have such very simple order of rank as: real hand, hand cut off, painted hand. They have an order of prior and posterior, i.e., higher, less high, lower, lowest. In other words, the political things—that's the reason why Aristotle makes this complicated remark—the political things are more complex than these two simple cases of hardly anything in common or perfect neutrality regarding rank.

So this much: the citizen is relative to the regime. That in itself is easy to understand: a man who is a citizen in a democracy is not necessarily a citizen in an oligarchy and so on. That's elementary. But Aristotle goes out of his way in this very precise remark to make clear, to indicate again the great complexity of political matters. We will later on come to a very simple expression familiar to all of you from every day political life of a practical expression of what this complexity means. But we must not rush.

Now let us go on where we left off. The next sentence. Therefore, Aristotle says, "the citizen as defined before is to the highest degree a citizen in a democracy." You see again what I said

before. When Aristotle tries to define citizen, the most natural definition, the most obvious definition is that of the citizen in a democracy. Somehow the *polis* is primarily democratic—not in terms of time; the democracy is very late, as Aristotle makes clear later. But there is the simplest articulation, and it is also that from which political philosophy in fact started because it started in Athens. But this factual starting from democracy is not a mere accident. The democratic society, from Aristotle's point of view a decaying society, gives the stimulus to political reflection to a higher degree than the more old-fashioned forms of regime. Yes, can you [read]?

Reader:
Citizens living under other kinds of constitution *may* possibly, but do not necessarily, correspond to the definition. There are some states, for example, in which there is no popular element: such states have no regular meetings of the assembly, but only meetings specially summoned; and they remit the decision of cases to special bodies. In Sparta, for example, the Ephors take cases of contracts (not as a body, but each sitting separately); the Council of Elders take cases of homicide; and some other authority may take other cases. Much the same is also true of Carthage, where a number of bodies of magistrates have each the right to decide all cases. (1275b7-14)

LS: Well, take the simplest example: Aristotle defines the citizen as a man who is entitled to sit in the popular assembly, but there are constitutions in which there are no popular assemblies, so the definition doesn't apply. Therefore Aristotle has to give a more general definition, and that he will do in the sequel. Yes? The definition of the citizen.

Reader:
But our definition of citizenship can be amended. We have to note that in constitutions other than the democratic, members of the assembly and the courts do not hold that office for an indeterminate period. They hold it for a limited term; and it is to persons with such a tenure (whether they be many or few) that the citizen's function of deliberating and judging (whether on all issues or only a few) is assigned in these regimes.[vi] The nature of citizenship in general emerges clearly from these considerations; and our final definitions will accordingly be: (1) 'he who enjoys the right of sharing in deliberative or judicial office attains thereby the status of a citizen of his state,' and (2) 'a state, in its simplest terms, is a body of such persons adequate in number for achieving a self-sufficient existence.' (1275b14-22)

LS: Yes, well of course he says city and not state; we don't have to go into that. So unlimited ruling: you see that's the point; therefore the word "official" is so misleading. An official has a limited power to rule, either in time or in function, but there are in every society men who have an unlimited power. That is the Aristotelian analogon to the modern conception of sovereignty. There is somewhere a power neither limited in superiors—of course, that exists: a given citizen may be elected to be treasurer for one year. To be treasurer is a limited form of ruling, but all these limited forms of ruling are derivative from a basic form of ruling which is not limited. That is what in modern times is understood by sovereignty and that is, for example, in a democracy

[vi] In Barker: "constitutions"

the citizen body assembled. That is not established by someone else over some other body: that is the *causa prima*, the first cause for all political purposes, where you begin and from which all other power is delegated. The originating ruling: he who participates in originary ruling is the citizen. That's what Aristotle means and he makes a distinction between two kinds of ruling, or two kinds of activities, and we must see later on why he makes this distinction, namely, the ruling and the judging. But now he replaces ruling by deliberation. That's important. Do you see the connection? The ruling—I mean, judging is clear: you judge on the basis of given laws, you apply the laws to a given case. That's not so interesting. The fundamental thing is the ruling one. Why does Aristotle call the ruling activity the deliberating activity? [This is] a term of course which is still used in older constitutional theory in this country, the deliberative bodies,[3] and that stems from Aristotle. Yes?

Student: Well, because to deliberate indicates that you're deciding choice value, choices as to which way is the best way to go.

LS: In other words, the ruling is not surely what the police officer does when he says: Go this way, that way. That is absolutely derivative and uninteresting. But that goes back to a primary ruling which empowers the policeman to do that, and this primary ruling is called by Aristotle deliberation. But is this not a strange expression? Let us assume that the outcome of the deliberation is a law. But it is the outcome of a deliberation, I mean, as long as it is still under deliberation it is not yet a law. Why does Aristotle call it deliberative? How is it called today, the equivalent to that?

Student: Legislation.

LS: Yes, sure, but that is a part of the deliberative, but the ordinary word used for this kind of thing today.

Student: The legislative—

LS: That is what this lady said.

Same Student: Lawmaking process.

LS: Ya, but then you refer—no. The word which comes naturally to the mouth of everyone today, I believe you must know it: decision making. [Laughter] I mean of course on the highest level. But Aristotle does not speak of decision; he speaks of deliberation. And that's very important, and we can understand it a bit better. When you speak of decision, you do not necessarily imply *preceding* deliberation. Decision may very well be tossing the coins, tossing the coin. For Aristotle, the rational element comes out clearly by the term deliberation, and deliberation naturally ends in a decision. That goes without saying; otherwise it will not be consummated. But the emphasis is on the deliberation which brings about a rational decision.

This, by the way, is an interesting problem: How did the term decision acquire the tremendous importance it has in present-day political science language? I don't know, but it is worth considering. I'm sure that fifty years ago the term decision making did not enjoy that vogue

which it enjoys now. It would be interesting to go into that question. I believe it has something to do with the weakening of the belief in reason which has taken place in the last two generations. In Germany, where I was brought up, the key political thinker who made use of it, of this term, was Carl Schmitt, who later on became a leading Nazi jurist, and in his doctrine the link-up with certain philosophic . . . like Kierkegaard and so was quite obvious. I do not know whether this did not migrate via such people like Lasswell and so into this country, I don't know. It would be worth considering, that decision takes the place of deliberation.

Now then Aristotle has now achieved a universal definition of the citizen: the citizen is the man, we can say, who participates in originary ruling, a ruling or governing or commanding which does not have a further source. These people in the assembly do not receive dictation from someone else as a cop on the beat and even the judges—the judges too—receive dictations of the law. But then Aristotle is confronted with a minor difficulty which is very interesting. When people ordinarily speak about, define a citizen, they don't go so high up. And let us see how Aristotle disposes of that, immediately following.

Reader:
For practical purposes, it is usual to define a citizen as 'one born of citizen parents on both sides,' and not on the father's or mother's side only; but sometimes this requirement is carried still farther back, to the length of two, three, or more stages of ancestry. This popular and facile definition has induced some thinkers to raise the question, 'How did the citizen of the third or fourth stage of ancestry himself come to be a citizen?'— (1275b23-27)

LS: Do you see the difficulty? I mean, for practical purposes it's good enough to say every citizen is the son of a citizen-father and citizen-mother; or maybe you add the grandparents on both sides, that doesn't alter the problem. But then you get into a very great difficulty: What about the first founders? They were not the sons of a citizen-father and citizen-mother. In other words, then all citizens are descendants from noncitizens. The first settlers were not. That shows the theoretical absurdity of the definition. Still, for practical purposes, in a given society it might be all right. And he says [that] if they define citizen thus, politically and crudely, rashly (the text is not quite clear), the political definition is not good enough. The political is good enough for practical purposes; we have to go beyond that, which Aristotle did. And now the next point, where he shows to what this difficulty leads finally.

Reader:
Gorgias of Leontini—perhaps partly from a sense of this difficulty and partly in irony—said, 'As mortars are things which are made by the craftsmen who are mortar-makers, so Larissaeans are persons who are made by the 'craftsmen' who are Larissaean-makers.' (1275b27-31)

LS: Yes. Well, that is a joke which is not immediately intelligible, because the Greeks called natural citizens "made citizens," meaning artificially made. And what Gorgias says is this: if you think that through you arrive at the conclusion that all citizens are naturalized citizens, even the indigenous ones, because it is legitimately due to an act of convention who is and who is not to be a citizen. We can leave it at that unless you would like to raise a further point. We cannot read everything; let us turn to 1276a8, where he comes back to this question, some are in doubt

whether the city did it or not, for example, when a democracy arises from oligarchy or tyranny. Do you have that?

Reader:
The question whether, in justice, they are citizens or not is a different matter, which is closely connected with a larger question already mentioned. The problem raised by this larger question is that of deciding when a given act can, and when it cannot, be considered to be the act of the *polis*. We may take as an example the case of an oligarchy or tyranny which changes into a democracy. In such a case there are some who are reluctant to fulfil public contracts—arguing that such contracts were made by the governing tyrant, and not by the *polis*—and unwilling to meet other obligations of a similar nature. They hold the view that some constitutions exist by virtue of force, and not for the sake of the common good. This argument, however, leads us to the conclusion that when we find a democracy which exists by virtue of force we have to admit that acts done under the government of such a democracy are no more acts of the *polis* concerned than were acts done under the oligarchy or tyranny.[vii] (1276a8-18)

LS: Let us stop here. Now the practical question to which he refers is familiar to you. For example, the last big case when the Soviet government at the beginning refused to pay the debts of the Tsarist government, and they simply said that was not done: this debt was not incurred by the *polis*, by the Russian people, but by the tyrant, by the Tsarist government.[viii] I mean, the question is easy to understand. So Aristotle[4] admits there is a problem here and a very important one; not so much the practical problem [of] whether you should pay debts or not, but that you have to make a distinction between the *polis* and the regime. And now Aristotle says here: But you cannot leave it at this democratic argument because a democracy may be as illegitimate, as tyrannical as an oligarchy and a tyranny. In other words, the democratic distinction between the regime and the *polis* is a partisan distinction, and Aristotle wants to give a non-partisan distinction. That is what he's driving at.

Now here we can take a look into Aristotle's way of thinking about political matters. Well, in a way we all know that problem from present-day political science. The scientist cannot be a partisan. He must be neutral. Is Aristotle neutral? No, he's not neutral, nor is he a partisan. Macaulay said about Sir William Temple: Temple was not a mediator; he was merely a neutral.[ix] A neutral and a mediator are two different things. Aristotle wishes to be a mediator, an arbiter, a judge; he wants to be impartial, but to be impartial is not the same thing as to be neutral. The neutral says I don't care; the impartial man cares very much. Impartiality is the quality of the arbiter or judge, and justice is a virtue. I mean, impartiality is the same thing in a way, some aspect of justice. We can therefore say in a paradoxical way: Aristotle is in a *way* a partisan. He is a partisan of virtue. He thinks we cannot be neutral when confronted with the distinction between virtue and vice and he is gradually preparing his way toward that. Will you go on immediately where you left off, Mr. Abraham?

[vii] Where the student reads "*polis*," in Barker's translation it is "state."
[viii] After taking power in 1917, the Bolshevik government repudiated as illegitimate the debts that the Tsar owed to European creditors.
[ix] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Essay on Sir William Temple* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1905), 84.

Reader:
But the question here raised would seem to be closely allied to a question which takes us still further—'On what principles ought we to say that a *polis* has retained its identity, or, conversely, that it has lost its identity and become a different *polis*?' (1276a18-19)

LS: Ya. Now in order to understand that, let us take the case of a democracy replaced by a tyranny. That happens, [it] happened in our century and so on. What do the democrats say in such a case, who say: It was not Germany that did it but the Nazis? What do they say? They say in a way Germany has disappeared; it was completely overlaid by Nazis. Still more simply and more generally: the *polis* has disappeared. The *polis*—there was a tyrant, the *polis* has disappeared. Of course an oligarch would say, when there was a democracy: The *polis* has disappeared, and the *polis* has disappeared because of the disappearance of oligarchy. Now Aristotle's position among these partisans—his underlying procedure—Aristotle says: No, that's exaggerated if the democrats say the *polis* has disappeared when the tyrant ruled or when the oligarchs ruled. There was another *polis*. The partisans say: The *polis* has disappeared. The impartial Aristotle says: The *polis* was transformed into another *polis*. And that he will develop. In other words, Aristotle is now obliged to show that the change of a regime transforms one *polis* into another *polis*; and that is very strange, and not only now but was so [then]. Was Athens a different *polis* with every change of its regime? Was it not always the city of Athens? Did Aristotle not write or compile what we can call a history of the regimes of Athens,[5] just as we speak of the history of the British constitution under John, under William, and under Queen Elizabeth II? Same constitution, [but] changing: that's in a way the commonsensical view. And that is not a modern discovery; that was familiar to Aristotle, as proved by the fact that he wrote his book which was recovered about sixty years ago, *The Athenian Constitution*, which contains a history of the Athenian constitution.

Now I will link this up immediately with another point. In this other book, this much more popular work, *The Constitution of Athens*, Aristotle gives a definition of the good citizen which strikingly differs from the definition of the good citizen given here. The definition of the good citizen given here is that the good citizen is relative to the regime, so that a man who is a good citizen under a democracy is a bad citizen under an oligarchy and vice versa, and so on and so on. In the *Constitution*, this more popular writing, he takes a much more commonsensical view and says the good citizen is a man who is public-spirited or just, regardless of the difference of regimes. Here you see the issue. Let me use more familiar words now. The more common view and the more[x] —if it simply means love for the country regardless of the regime. But on the other hand, if you look more closely you see that no one is satisfied with that, because if someone says, as quite a few people say, "I love the United States, I love the country; therefore I want to have it communist," it's disloyal. So it is not merely loyalty to the country; it is loyalty to the regime which is important. This bifurcation is perhaps *the* secret of politics, and that is what Aristotle is concerned [with]. And you see also that in the more popular work he takes the more simplistic view. In here he brings it out not with all the sharpness which he had in his mind, but with sufficient sharpness. So therefore the technical form of this tremendously practical question is: What is it that makes the city one? Is it the country? Well, clearly not, because the country

[x] The tape was changed at this point.

can be inhabited by entirely different people. I mean, this country was inhabited, as a matter of fact, by entirely different people, and yet no one could say this was—I mean, no one would write a history of the American Constitution and give an account of the tribal organization of the Red Indians,[6] because that was not the American Constitution. So the locality, while being an indispensable condition—no political society without a locality—the locality doesn't have to be as small as that of Athens or Thebes; it may be as large as that of the United States, but the definite locality. In the moment you would have no longer a definite locality, you would no longer have politics strictly speaking. That would be a world state. Then there is no definite locality anymore—the whole globe—unless there would be human beings on other planets and there would be some interesting relations between the Earthmen and the Martians, or whoever there might be. Well, again there would be politics proper.

Now what makes the *polis* run? The more interesting question: Could the *polis* not be—and that corresponds very much to our notion—could the *polis* not correspond to a river?[7] New generations succeed older generations, just as new water flows down, yet there is still the same river. In other words, could not the *polis* have the character of something like a riverbed? Could it not have? Aristotle rejects that, and let us see his answer: 1276b, at the beginning.

Reader:
If a *polis* is a form of association, and if this form of association is an association of citizens in a polity or constitution, it would seem to follow inevitably that when the constitution suffers a change in kind, and becomes a different constitution, the *polis* also will cease to be the same *polis*, and will also change its identity. We may cite an analogy from the drama. We say that a chorus which appears at one time as a comic and at another as a tragic chorus is not continuously the same, but alters its identity—and this in spite of the fact that the members often remain the same. What is true of a chorus is also true of every other form of association, and of all other compounds generally. If the scheme of composition is different, the compound becomes a different compound. A harmony composed of the same notes will be a different harmony according as the 'mode'is Dorian or Phrygian. If this is the case, it is obvious that the criterion to which we must chiefly look in determining the identity of the state is the criterion of the constitution. (1276b1-12)

LS: Let us stop here. You see, Mr. Flaumenhaft, it says "chiefly." That's the most interesting consideration; it is not the sole consideration. In other words, if the same locality is inhabited by an entirely different tribe, which expels tribe number one and has the same kind of regime, it's a new *polis* because of the identity of the matter. I mean, the *polis* remains one if both its matter and its form remain the same. If the matter is changed radically—yes?

Student: Would you say the United States is then a different nation when Maine is cut up and part goes to Canada and . . . purchased new land . . .

LS: Well, that is a somewhat complicated question because, after all, the United States existed before that, and the question is whether it was extended somewhat.

Student: Well, what I'm saying is, does the matter have to remain the same? You see that the matter changes.

LS: Well, as in all such matters, they are questions of degree. I mean, in other words, if say the whole of Central America were added, that would make it a different country; but the addition of Maine alone . . . you know, that depends, because[8] the kind of human beings who preponderated prior to the coming in of Maine, they're the same as afterward. Therefore it's not important. One must not be petty, you know, although it is necessary to think of this kind of thing.

Student: Just to pursue that a minute—in . . . England when the British pass a Reform Bill in the nineteenth century, the character of the regime is changed considerably; and yet a person who is in favor of it can be very loyal but . . . I'm not sure what he remains loyal to.

LS: Yes, but the question—of which change of the regime you are speaking now?

Student: Well, after the Reform Bill of 1832.

LS: Yes, but the question is really[9] whether the changes which Britain underwent after the seventeenth century were—I mean, there was one, the democratization you know—well, let me say[10] the two revolutions that were real big changes [in the] seventeenth century: 1640 and 1689. That was a great change by virtue of which a certain kind of parliament became the controlling force instead of that tug of war between Parliament and king which preceded it. Then you got two big changes . . . and one was 1832, and the other was about 1911 or so, Lloyd George. I mean, Britain became really a democracy; previously it was a qualified democracy. From Aristotle's point of view, he would say that by these three changes, Britain changed its character fundamentally. Sure. But not smaller change. For example, the changes you had in this country, I believe, are infinitesimal compared with such changes, where there was never a question of a hereditary nobility here,[11] and the property qualifications I have been given to understand were very small and therefore there was not such a fundamental change. And the addition of women, of course, whether that is a politically important change is a very long question, you know; whether it is not simply a duplication of the previous division of votes to different groups, that is a long question. It differs in France. I suppose . . . it is different; but I believe, as far as I know, not in this country. Surely there are all kinds of transitional things. Aristotle will speak of them. I mean, he distinguishes among four kinds of democracies. The types are clearly distinguished but there are always transitional forms and that's infinite.

Now what was his point? The *polis* is one chiefly with a view to the regime. That may sound very formalistic, not to say legalistic, but you see immediately that it is not so if I use now an un-Aristotelian word to describe what Aristotle means (he will bring it out later in his language).[12] A city is one with a view to its spirit. If its spirit changes, that is the most important change which a city can undergo. If the spirit is feudal and then turns into commercial, that's the greatest change, or changes of the same nature. But we have to know a bit more about regime than we know now. Let us read now only the immediately following point where you left off—and . . . raise this question: whether it is just to say "to pay or not to pay." When the *polis* changes into a different regime is a different question. You remember that was the practical question on which Aristotle

started, to which he referred, that when a change of regime takes place people sometimes say: We don't have to pay the debts of the previous regime because not the *polis* incurred the debt but the oligarchs or the tyrant. And Aristotle returns you to the question but doesn't answer it, and says that's another matter. Now I read the statement by Professor Voegelin, in which he drew the conclusion that Aristotle doesn't answer the question because he cannot answer the question,[xi] and why is he not able to answer the question? Because of his erroneous notion that the unity of the *polis* resides essentially in the regime. In other words, Voegelin starts from the common notion, especially today but also in older times, that the constitution of a—that the country, the country—or say society, only society is a less political expression for what we also mean by country. May I state this in general: if you try to understand any classic text about politics, if you substitute in reading it for *polis* "the country," then you are much closer than any other point of view. The country, which has a much more political connotation, as you know. No one would say: Right or wrong, my society. [Laughter] Society is an unpolitical concept. So in other words, Voegelin says Aristotle cannot account for continuity because of his assertion the regime—that is not the point. Aristotle has a perfect answer to that question although he doesn't give it here, nor explicitly elsewhere, but it is trivial. Every man of common sense can answer it. What would you say? What is a fair decision if the regime is changed and there are debts? What one should do? What would a fair judge assign?

Student: Payment?

LS: No, not always. If the fellow borrowed that money in order to have a bodyguard which tormented the citizens, no.

Student: . . . if a first principle . . .

LS: No, because if a fellow is a criminal in the first place . . . no, but the simple distinction would be if these expenses were made, regardless of the motives, for the lasting benefit of the city. For example, building hospitals, bridges, and so on, and the citizens enjoy it after the change of the regime, it would seem to be fair that they pay for it; otherwise no. I was told that this is exactly the position taken by present-day international law, which shows that that is not completely deprived of reason. [Laughter]

Now here Aristotle turns then to the question,[13] abruptly, of the good man and the good citizen. But the subject was already implied in whatever he said. The good citizen depends on the regime. A good citizen of Nazi Germany is not a good citizen of Adenauer Germany, because the good citizen in Nazi Germany was loyal, fully loyal to the Nazi regime and then he could not be a good citizen to the Adenauer regime unless he changed his mind completely. Therefore the good citizen is relative to the regime. But the good man is not relative. The good man is defined, you can say, by the nature of man: the man who has perfected his human qualities properly. Now from this it follows, and that is the great problem of loyalty, that the good man can be loyal only to the good regime. That is the problem of loyalty in the simplest form. I mean, I'm speaking now—I mean loyalty not merely in the sense that one doesn't commit high treason and so on, but

[xi] See Eric Voegelin, *Collected Works*, vol. 6: *Anamnesis: On the Theory of History and Politics*, ed. David Walsh (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 158.

in the sense of full dedication—identification, as I believe they say now. Now what is the precise answer of Aristotle to the question? Aristotle does not say they are distinguished, the good man and the good citizen, but they may coincide under certain conditions, and what are these conditions? Mr. Flaumenhaft? Under what conditions is the good man identical with the good citizen?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: . . . the good regime, the good man and the good citizen are identical in the good regime where the good man is a citizen, or rules.

LS: Is in a ruling function; when he is ruling. The good citizen in a good regime, when ruling, is a good man. If his rulership is dormant, he is not simply identical with the good man. Yes?

Student: Must we identify the rulers with the sovereign power rather than, say, a judicial function?

LS: Ya, that surely would come into it, that they could do that; but it is not as basic as the deliberative function. Let us turn to 1277b (we have now to rush a bit), shortly after the beginning. Well, we must—only the . . . . For Aristotle that is crucial, the difference between ruler and ruled, because a good man in his qualities as a good man becomes actual only in ruling, as certain important qualities belonging to the good man as good man are dormant if he does not actually rule. That is what Aristotle has in mind. Therefore, the distinction between ruler and ruled is important, and as is his wont he opens the issue broadly, beyond what is immediately necessary, and he raises this question: Is ruling in all cases acquired by being ruled? Are there not forms of ruling which we can acquire without having been ruled? The simplest case is that of the ruling of slaves. The master rules slaves. Must he have been a slave? Obviously not. That would even disqualify him from being a master according to Aristotle, and in this connection, he makes a little point which is revealing. Do you have it? 1277b. Now the actions of the ruler—

Reader:
The occupations pursued by men who are subject to rule of the sort just mentioned need never be studied by the good man, or by the statesman, or by the good citizen—except occasionally and in order to satisfy some personal need, in which case there ceases to be any question of the relation of master and servant. (1277b3-8)

LS: Now which very remote facts does Aristotle have in mind? Which menial functions may cease to be menial if they are done only for one's own use?

Student: Gardening.

LS: That is much too high. Shaving—from Aristotle's point of view, to shave, to do a personal service to the body of someone else is menial, but if you do it to yourself it is not menial. Or any other thing of this kind. This is only a passing point which I thought we should mention.

A bit later on, where we left off: the general principle, Aristotle makes clear, for free men is that they acquire the art of ruling free men by having been ruled as free men. And he gives the example: in order to become a ruler of cavalry you have to have been a ruled cavalryman first,

and so on and so on. Do you have that, Mr. Abraham? Immediately afterward: there has been—a lower officer before you can become a higher officer, and therefore it is well said that one cannot rule well; it is impossible to rule well if one has not been ruled well, you may supply. Yes? Paragraph 15.

Reader:
Ruler and ruled have indeed different excellences; but the fact remains that the good citizen must possess the knowledge and the capacity requisite for ruling as well as for being ruled, and the excellence of a citizen may be defined as consisting in 'a knowledge of rule over free men from both points of view.' A good man, like a good citizen, will need knowledge from both points of view. Accordingly, on the assumption that the temperance and justice required for ruling have a special quality, and equally that the temperance and justice required for being a subject in a free state have *their* special quality, the excellence of the good man (e.g. his justice) will not be one sort of excellence. It will include different sorts— (1277b13-19)

LS: In other words, the problem with which Aristotle is concerned is this: Is the good man identical or not identical with the good citizen? Now first we know that only in the case of the good regime can there be any possible identity. But secondly, he says that is not sufficient because[14] there are citizens, good citizens in the good regime, both in a ruling and in a ruled function, and yet it is the ruling function which is that of the good man as good man. But if on the other hand, we see now you cannot be a ruling good citizen without being, again, at the next term, a ruled good citizen. That is the question. Yes?

Reader:
one sort which fits him to act as a ruler, and one which fits him to act as a subject. We may note that the temperance and courage of a man differ from those of a woman in much the same sort of way. A man would be thought to be cowardly if his courage were only the same as that of a courageous woman; and conversely a woman would be thought to be forward if her modesty were no greater than that which becomes a good man. The function of the man in the household is different from that of the woman: it is the function of the one to acquire, and of the other to keep and store. (1277b19-25)

LS: Let us stop here. Do you see that? Aristotle says: Don't get confused. Let us take a simple example, where a duality of the same virtue appears in two different persons: modesty, or temperance. A man is temperate; a woman is temperate, and yet the temperance in the one case differs from the temperance in the other case. Now Aristotle says that [something similar] may happen within the same person,[15] that in his ruling capacity his virtue may differ from his virtue in the ruled capacity. And now he will say in what it precisely consists.

Reader:
'Prudence' is the only form of goodness which is peculiar to the ruler.— (1277b25-26)

LS: So in other words, the examples hitherto were uninteresting, of temperance and justice. Prudence is the point. The prudence of the ruler is different from the prudence of the ruled, so

much so that we may say, as Aristotle is going to say, that what corresponds to the prudence of the ruler in the ruled is not prudence, properly speaking. Read on.

Reader:
The other forms must, it would seem, belong equally to rulers and subjects. The form of goodness peculiar to subjects cannot be 'prudence,' and may be defined as 'right opinion.' The ruled may be compared to flute-makers: rulers are like flute-players who use what the flute-makers make. (1277b25-31)

LS: Here Aristotle takes again two different persons to make it clear. Now what's the difference between the flutemaker[16] and the flute player? The flute player is a commander, the commanding man, and he tells the flutemaker what to make. He tells him, i.e., the flutemaker does not have knowledge of his own of the end served. He is told only what he has to know for making it. So the ruled is less knowing than the ruler. That applies to political things: as ruled, I am given the results of the deliberation; as ruler, I deliberate. There is a connection between this passage and the passage which we read last time and which created so much excitement when Aristotle says laws owe their force only to habituation, where habituation means you are told as a child. Well, you may be given some reasons but you do not necessarily possess your whole reasoning as the legislator himself must possess it. Therefore it is not reasoning but habituation which makes you obey the law.[17] Later on he makes clear (that was brought out in the paper) that not everyone who may be somehow a citizen, and even a good citizen, not everyone who may be a good citizen necessarily can possess the virtue of man, as he says in 1278[a]20 to 21: "for it is not possible to do the actions, to perform the actions of virtue if one leads the life of a menial." It's not possible. Aristotle's notion of virtue or morality is not the notion with which we are most familiar. That appears clearly from such passages. Now do you have a watch? Ya, but I must say a few words, otherwise we have much too much next time.

Now then after this long preparation Aristotle comes to the definition of the *politeia*, or rather—yes, well we can say to the definition of the *politeia*. There are two elements in it. One is brought out here. The other one is mentioned much later, in the fourth book. But both, it is good to see both together from the beginning; and the first is [that] the regime has to do with the ruling offices. The ruling offices means not the particular appointed officials; that is also part, but that's not the important part. The ruling offices means the participation in deliberation and judgment by the whole *polis*, the political functions proper. This is one consideration. The other consideration is supplied by Aristotle's remark later on that a regime is a way of life. So this shows immediately that for Aristotle the so-called constitutions are not legal or merely legal arrangements. The legal is for Aristotle absolutely derivative; therefore I avoid the word constitution, because constitution is a legal document or something of this kind. Aristotle has something much more fundamental in mind. The laws presuppose a legislator, and the first question is—the legislator cannot himself be appointed by a law. There must be something which is ultimately no longer legal but factual, which doesn't mean that it is illegal or so but it is factual. In every society we find, in the language of the present day, such a thing as stratification: people who are looked up to and people who are not looked up to everywhere. But there are various kinds of being looked up to. I heard once from a student of Chinese things that the Chinese travelers and geographers, when they came to a country the first question—the old Chinese—they raised was how do they bow to their king. How do they greet their king? That

was a very wise question. They took it for granted that people bow to something. That is clear, and therefore the only question was how to bow. But the first question still in a more reflective approach would be: To whom do people bow? Now in this country you sometimes have the impression that the people looked up to are certain actors and actresses in Hollywood. That is true. But that is by no means unimportant, these so-called social things, but they are not fundamental from Aristotle's point of view because ultimately we come to something, to some people who are looked up to in the way that they rule openly, in broad daylight and not in this way—if you don't look up to Cary Grant, Bette Davis, that's your private business. But you have to look up to—not even to President Eisenhower for that matter—but you have to look up to the Constitution. That is not left to your arbitrary will. But the Constitution, of course, ultimately leads back to something which is called the people who have established the Constitution.

So now for Aristotle this notion of the people, which means "all," doesn't exist. There is either one, or the few, or the many; a rule of all is a very complicated problem.[18] And when he makes a division to which Mr. Flaumenhaft referred, there is a division not in one, few, or all, but one, few, many. And what Aristotle has in mind is this. Let us assume the people who are looked up to in a nonarbitrary way, as we look up to Cary Grant, are, for example, such people as the merchants, the great merchants—or they may be warlords, or they may be squires, or they may be the common man. That also exists. There may be also combinations of these things, and that is more difficult to analyze but in principle the same thing. There is always some kind, some human type which is looked up to, and that is what Aristotle means by the regime. The regime is only that by human type; therefore the simple classification according to numbers—one, few, many—is, as Aristotle in his wisdom says, accidental. That is, as we would say in a bad un-Aristotelian language, form, and not the substance of it. And Aristotle proves this very nicely by saying: Well, if you say[19] rule of a few is oligarchy, and rule of the many is democracy—but we also think of the rich and the poor, and then we get this interesting possibility but which isn't a possibility: that the few would be poor and the many would be rich. It's a purely academic question. It so happens that the rich are few and the poor are many. That is the distinction, the standard distinction.

Now Aristotle makes this formal distinction in terms of one, few, many, only for reasons of exhaustiveness: to assure himself that he covered the ground. This is an exhaustive distinction: one, few, many. Rich and poor would not be at first glance an exhaustive distinction. Now it is clear, now if you go into details more and would, for example, say: What kind of rich? Are they squires or are the industrialists? Or in the case of the poor: Are they peasants, or are they workers or are they artisans? Then you would get the notion of how this can truly designate a way of life and not a merely legal arrangement. That is, the question of the regime is a question of the way of life as it finds its expression in ruling and being ruled. And that is not an accidental consideration, because these various human types or ways of life tend by themselves to predominate. They tend to, they desire to put their stamp on society as a whole.[20] And that leads to all kinds of questions and the key question of course is: Which is the desirable type? That's the question of the best regime which Aristotle tries to answer. You can also say: Well, you never get the desirable type or are not likely to get it; what is the best combination of types that would be more practical? That is underlying the notion of the mixed regime or the mixed life. But you can never divorce the merely political from this moral element, however you call it, which means the constitution as a way of life.

Only one point I would like to mention for those who are interested in this kind of thing. In order to get his classification of the regimes, Aristotle says we must know first two things. First, what is the end of political association, purpose of political association; and second, what are the forms of rule. Now the purposes are three. First, man is by nature a social being, a political being, which means he likes living together for its own sake. That's one point. In other words, without any regard to interest, that he gets benefits or conveniences from it, man is by nature a social being. Secondly, the common good or the common benefit; and thirdly, mere living, i.e., protection or security. The latter is of course the Hobbean or Lockean notion. Well, one might mention in passing a nice difference. Aristotle, in analyzing why men love to live, speaks of a natural sweetness of mere living.[xii] Hobbes speaks of the terror of death. So in other words, not that life is something wonderful, but death is so terrible that we run away from death to life, however terrible. For Aristotle, there is an indication that living itself has a natural sweetness. The main point is [that] the common good however is the chief consideration. And that is the central, literally the central, according to the famous rule . . .

Now—and then Aristotle says the kinds of rule and they are divided into two classes: despotic rule, which means the rule of slaves for the benefit of the master, and this obviously cannot be a good political rule because political rule is rule over free men. The other kind of rule which he mentions explicitly is economic rule, i.e., the rule of the father over the children, or of the husband over the wife, which is a rule for the benefit of the ruled. But then the situation seems to be very one-sided. The rulers rule for the benefit of the ruled, and do they not have any benefit for themselves, like parents who live entirely for their children without expectation of being rewarded? Can this be simply applied to political rule? How does Aristotle get out of that? Do you remember, Mr. Flaumenhaft? Yes?

Mr. Flaumenhaft: . . .

LS: Yes?

Student: In comparison . . . medicine . . . practicing should be ruler . . . but then you also step down from . . .

LS: Yes, well take the gymnastic teacher. He is the ruler of the pupils getting the training, and he does it entirely for the pupils. But absolutely nothing prevents him from joining in the gymnastic exercises, so he gets the benefit from it accidentally, and that is according to Aristotle the natural relation. He means of course this: that in a republican society the ruler now will be the ruled next year, and vice versa, so there is really the common benefit. So one would then have to make a distinction between two kinds of rule, politically possible rule, in which (a) the ruler is purely beneficent—no benefit deriving to him; or [b] mutual benefit. And we can say the first would be patriarchal, monarchical rule and the second would be republican rule in various forms. From this we understand partly why Aristotle has a certain preference for kingship, because there is a higher degree of beneficence involved if the ruler is like a father thinking only of his ruled, and not someone who derives benefit, as in a republican society where he would be the ruled next

[xii] *Politics* 1278b27-30.

year. And the distinction of these six classes is crucial for the whole later development of political science,[xiii] and I don't think I have to write it on the blackboard because you all must know it by now: the six regimes which Aristotle distinguishes. But we will get much more, hear much more about it later on.

[xiii] The tape ends here; the remainder of the sentence is taken from the original transcript.

Session 7: April 19, 1960
The *polis* and the regime (book 3)

Leo Strauss: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Hertz, that was a very . . . paper.[i] The question which you raised regarding the difficulties of Aristotelian argument is a very important one if one wants to understand the book. A very common view, if I remember well, is that the *Politics* were lectures, as [are] most of the Aristotelian works which we have, and lectures are not necessarily built up in such a severe way [as that] in which a book can be built up. But the more I read Aristotle, especially the *Politics*, the more I am sure that this was a book and not just lectures. Therefore the only hypothesis compatible with Aristotle's intelligence and ability is that he proceeded the way he did deliberately, and that these windings[1] are essential to the argument as he understands it. Now of course you are dependent on Barker, not only the translation but also Barker's division of the subject matter into chapters, and as I saw from your presentation, that is not necessarily helpful. The defect has nothing to do with the grade I'm going to give you. The defect of your paper can be stated very simply as follows. Aristotle's argument in the assignment of today leads up to a view which is very attractive to us, namely, that what we now call democracy is the only sound solution. Aristotle doesn't use the word "democracy" here, but what he means, in effect, is something as what we understand by democracy: the whole citizen body, I mean the poor too, form the deliberative and judicial assembly. That corresponds today to the right to vote and the right to sit on juries. But the executive offices are in the hands of qualified people, and there are certain guarantees in one way or another—Aristotle doesn't say which here. To quote the remark of President Eisenhower some time ago, "governmental office is not a right but a privilege, whereas voting is a right and not a privilege." So in other words, the whole citizen body, foreigners and slaves excluded naturally, elects the governmental officers and the governmental officers really rule; they are not merely obeying an imperative mandate of the electorate. Now, and this[ii] —he turns to an entirely different argument in which some elements of the democratic argument still occur, naturally, but the argument culminates in the justification of absolute monarchy. That is the strange happening in book 3. You have two peaks: one, what corresponds let me say to [a] modern republic in ancient form, and the other is absolute monarchy. Why? And the chapter divisions as Barker makes them—I don't say that he is wrong in making them; he follows a certain articulation of Aristotle's argument. But one would have to divide this whole bulk into two chief parts: one, the argument for a quasi-democratic republic, and (b) an argument for absolute monarchy.

Now what we would expect, the simple procedure, the clear procedure would be that Aristotle, after having completed the democratic argument, would now say what powerful reasons speak against democracy, and therefore we have to look for an alternative. That he doesn't do. Why he doesn't do it, that's a long question. That is a very long question. I will make a suggestion which is perhaps not intelligible to most of you, but I will nevertheless make it. It would sound absolutely ridiculous, I know that, but nevertheless I will say it: that there is a certain kinship

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] There was a break in the tape at this point.

between Aristotle and Jane Austen. You know Jane Austen, and Jane Austen's marvelous quality never to speak about the seamy side of life, as everything is decent. Aristotle has also a certain love for the decencies of life and the unfortunate indecent elements are played down, and perhaps Aristotle's procedure has something to do with that. Now if we want to understand and not merely to be edified—although it is practically very important that we are edified but it is also important that we understand—we have to dig a bit deeper and try to recognize these difficult things, these abysses, so to say, which Aristotle does not think it wise to report. Aristotle's *Politics* is not a theoretical book simply. Aristotle's book is practical, just as his *Ethics*: trying to make people good citizens or good statesmen. The theoretical difficulty involved, the abysses, that is not his purpose to set forth. And one can easily read the *Politics* without—or for that matter the *Ethics*—without becoming aware of these abysses. For example, this discussion of the good man and the good citizen can be read, and it is wholly enjoyable and edifying, but that this has something to do with the harsh problem of loyalty as we know it today, that doesn't appear immediately; you have to think about that. Perhaps we can find something out while going over that. Yes, I think I leave it at these remarks regarding your paper and we turn to the text.

Book 3, as I repeatedly said, is the most important book of the *Politics*, and I'm by no means certain that we can finish the discussion, even our very preliminary discussion, today. We might be compelled to devote next meeting still to the third book, and therefore we would have to add another meeting at the end and it would mean a postponement of all papers; but this does not mean that you should not have ready your papers at the assigned time because I don't know. I only reserve the right. [Laughter]

Now what we must understand before we go on are certain crucial points from last time. And that the crucial point is the distinction between the *polis*, the political society, and the regime. No *polis* without a regime, nor a regime without a *polis*. That's clear. Nevertheless, they must be distinguished. Now let us take a simple example. What is the *polis*, first? Well, we know a certain association which is, in the modern sense of the term, sovereign towards the outside, toward other cities. It is of fairly small size, but not so small as not to enable its members to develop their faculties fully. You know that. But that is not sufficiently illuminating. I suggested that we, in order to understand the human meaning of the *polis*, we translate *polis* not by city, nor still less of course by state, and still less by city-state. City-state is only a silly attempt to solve the problem by concealing it, because if you don't know what a state is, how can we know what a city-state is? But my country. Country is the "quote emotional unquote" equivalent to what *polis* means in Greece, and therefore it is not the same as society because when we speak of country we don't mean the same as society. It may be terribly difficult to articulate the difference, but we all understand it. And permit me to repeat my example. No one would say: Right or wrong, my society; whereas it makes sense to say: Right or wrong, my country. So we must understand that. The word which is used by the Greeks as well as by the Romans, as well as by the Continentals, unless in the Anglo-Saxon countries—*polis* is frequently used synonymously [LS writes on the blackboard] with the Greek word *patris*, which is in Latin, *patria*, and in English translation, fatherland, which is in very common use on the European continent, disliked by some more subtle people because of its crude patriotic implications, but it is a political reality of course of the first order. We cannot be squeamish in these matters. The Anglo-Saxon equivalent is country. Sure.

Now the country, let us say, corresponds to the *polis*; and everyone is supposed to love the country, to devote himself to it, to die for it if need be. Let us take an example from private life to make this clear: parents and children. They are supposed to love their children, and in many cases they do it without being told—the natural love—just as in many cases people love their country without being told. That is clear and simple, but it becomes complicated. Let us assume the parents have a child on whom they dote but that's a good-for-nothing. That creates a problem. So the situation would be simpler if the child were a good child, but a child is not necessarily a good child, and therefore there can be a conflict in the parents between their love for their child and their loathing of the child because it is not a good child. Apply this to the country, to the political society: there can be a cleavage between the simple love or patriotism and the dissatisfaction with the character of the country. That's the distinction between the *polis* and the regime. The *polis* is neutral, we can say, to the distinction between good and bad. That is not literally true, but let us say[2] in itself the *polis* is neutral. The regime cannot be neutral and there must be a regime. The city must have a quality of good or bad, or medium, or best and worst and whatever it may be on the rainbow, but if it is not good, a problem is created; and now this is not thought out by Aristotle. The experience in our century shows it all the time. The people who escape from behind the Iron Curtain, and many other examples which show that these Poles love Poland, but they loathe the Polish regime. Now in practice of course it means they abandon Poland; they escape from it. That's the situation; only it existed and it was of course very familiar to Aristotle because the difference of regimes played a very great role in Greece. You can have periods which are perhaps more happy, perhaps not, in which there is everywhere the same regime, so if you are dissatisfied you don't know where to go. That can happen. But there are also times in which there are different regimes in different countries, and that is the situation today and was in Aristotle's time. But you wanted to say something.

Student: I didn't understand your analogy. What part of the—let's see, we have a parent-child and a *polis*, and what else?

LS: Parent to child equal to citizen to country or fatherland. Pardon?

Student: In that order?

LS: For making clear this point, yes. I mean, is the problem not clear in itself?

Different Student: May I offer the analogy of the case of the grown man with an elderly authoritarian father slipping into his dotage . . . and then at least he's in that nominal formal relation.

LS: Yes, man to son and father equal to—

Student: Citizen to Nazi regime.

LS: Could be. Yes. Well, but I think there is really no—[laughter] but the basic point is clear: that you have a love for a being. The being may be an individual, it may be a society. Love for a being. And this love for the being is in itself indifferent, literally. Parents can love their children

even if they are terrible—even if they know that they are terrible. That's their suffering. And yet they have necessarily the wish that the children be good, be not terrible. It's a simple thing. That is the analogon on the private level of the difference between *polis* and regime, and one can say that the distinction between the *polis* and the regime, which is very obvious once you think of it, is nevertheless the mystery of politics. All deeper difficulties stem from that. If the political situation were that of a simple member of a tribe to his tribe, no problem would arise except that consisting in the difference[3] between egoism and dedication to the common good. That would still exist there; but the much more subtle difference is due to the difference of regimes which in this form requires a much more developed society, a political society.

Now we will have to come back to this problem on a somewhat different level. Aristotle's thesis was then that the authoritative thing is the regime. The *polis* owes its character to the regime. The *polis* is, or if we may use a convenient expression from Aristotle's ontology, the *polis* is in itself the matter. The regime is the form and the form is that which gives a character to a thing. And the example of Aristotle which was read last time is really very illuminating. You have fifteen fellows. They are the same individuals, but now they are used [differently]: they play in a tragic chorus, and a week later they play in a comic chorus. The individuals are the same; the meaning of the association is completely altered. In the first case, a tragic chorus, and the second case, a comic chorus. That is an illustration—as all illustrations, an imperfect one, but still in its limits enlightening of the difference of regimes. Just as the same individuals in a different arrangement and for a different purpose—once members of that chorus, and then of another—they can be once members of one regime and then members of another regime. And[4] the individuals don't remain unaltered by that. The different function, the different purpose affects them. Their activities, the activities of these individuals, differs when they are members of a comic chorus than when they are members of a tragic chorus, just as the activities of the individuals change if they are members of a democracy or if they are members of a communist regime, or Nazi regime or what have you. So these are not farfetched things. These are things which we immediately recognize in spite of the profound changes in present-day society.

Now once it is understood that the authoritative thing, the thing by which we take our bearings is the regime, the regime becomes then the key subject of political science, as it does in Aristotle. By the way, it is really the trivial thing which you all know. The exciting theme today, political theme, on which the exciting character of all other themes, political themes, depends is the struggle between liberal democracy and communism. Everyone knows that. Yes, but if you try to express this in general terms you have to say the difference between two regimes. It is not the difference between a country of the size of Russia and of the size of the United States, or of this racial blend in Russia and that racial blend in the West, or what have you. The crucial point is that this is communism and this is liberal democracy. These are two forms of regime for which Aristotle, in a way, did not provide because Aristotle thought only of simpler regimes, and it would be our task by an analysis which we would have to make to use the Aristotelian basic analysis of the basic regimes for a proper analysis of what the difference between liberal democracy and communism is.

But to come back to Aristotle, we have to find out, we have to get a survey of all possible regimes. That would be at least the most desirable thing if we could have it. Aristotle believes he has it, and the disjunctions from which he starts are those. The rulers are either one, or few, or

the many. And the other consideration is good or bad, meaning directed toward the common good or only toward the good of the ruling group. And so we get this scheme which has been—has had a terrific history—I mean, the basis of all traditional distinctions. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Now: good and bad. One, few, many. And then we get kingship and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, polity and democracy. Aristotle's scheme. And it is understood that the sequence of goodness is this: the opposite of the best is the worst, and therefore democracy is better than oligarchy and tyranny, but still bad enough from Aristotle's point of view. The scheme was already sketched in Plato's *Statesman*, almost identical, but not quite identical, and then it was repeated with a slightly different terminology more attractive to our ears, namely, by Polybius, the Greek historian of Rome [LS writes on the blackboard] in the second century B.C. Polybius has it and simply called this, what Aristotle called polity, democracy, and called that ochlocracy, mob rule, what Aristotle called democracy: fundamentally the same thing. So that is, in a way, the key system of coordinates of the traditional orientation, and I think one should at least mention that.

But Aristotle doesn't leave it at this external orientation because he is the opposite of a so-called formalist. He is always concerned with the substance of the thing. And the point is this. He takes the examples of oligarchy and democracy and he says: rule of the few and rule of the many is not very helpful. The few who rule in an oligarchy are the rich and the many are the poor, and once you look at that it becomes immediately interesting and ceases to be "quote abstract unquote" because what do you know when you hear the words few and many? And then you know it's rich and poor; yet you understand that is politically important. The formal scheme is used merely in order to guarantee exhaustiveness, and that it does, but it is of no use beyond that. In other words, the distinction in the light of numbers deals merely with accidents, as Aristotle calls it. It is accidental that the few are rich and the many are poor, but the reason why this is politically interesting is not the fewness or manyness in itself, but wealth and poverty.

Now after having made clear these points, Aristotle immediately goes over, in 1279b to 1280a, to a more detailed discussion of two of these regimes. That seems to be one of these, how shall I say, of these irrational, disorderly things which Aristotle does. Instead of beginning at the beginning, kingship first, he begins with oligarchy and democracy, apparently because—no, he doesn't say anything. But we have seen one thing already at the beginning of book 3, that when Aristotle tried to define the citizen he gave first the democratic definition. You remember. And even earlier he stated the general problem in terms in which the democrats would state it: Not the *polis* did it but the oligarchs did it or the tyrant did it—which is the democratic argument. And I tried to show that this is connected with a certain democratic proclivity of the *polis* which Aristotle assumes and of which we shall hear later and also leads him now to concentrate, for the time being, on the difference between oligarchy and democracy. And in a way, for us today enlightened or corrupted by the so-called tough realism of present-day political science, Aristotle would have been much better advised to begin altogether with oligarchy and democracy. Now let us see how this works out.

That in every political society which is not very primitive there are the rich and the poor is, I think, generally granted; and such heroes of political realism like Machiavelli repeated that statement with great force. So let us then say this: the most natural inclination of civil society is either to be ruled by the rich or to be ruled by the poor. In the first case it is oligarchy, and in the

second case it is democracy. Now Aristotle, being a sober man and not a partisan, says: Well, both parties have a point, but that proves of course that none of them is simply right, and so we have to seek for an intermediate solution—as we would say today, a compromise. Ya, but Aristotle says a compromise is not necessarily a solution of the problem, that you combine the advantages of both with avoiding the disadvantages of both. Because if you get that which truly combines the advantages and avoids the disadvantages you get not a mere compromise, you get something better. And that is what Aristotle calls a mean. So the mean is not located here, but here. [LS writes on the blackboard.] That is crucial for Aristotle. In other words, the mean is not on the line, on the bottom. Good. Now Aristotle said that is, to begin with, a purely speculative remark, but then Aristotle recognizes in this consideration a fact, a political fact. There is a regime which has this character which is in between oligarchy and democracy and yet superior to both, and that is what he calls polity. It's a pity I had to remove the other schema [from the blackboard]—so well, this is a complete menace for teaching Aristotle. That is almost . . . So you remember that: kingship, aristocracy, polity; tyranny, oligarchy, democracy. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Now we have now disposed of oligarchy and democracy by . . . Now we have recognized polity.

Now what is the principle of polity? Very simple. You don't have simple rule of the rich, you don't have rule of the poor, by a very simple device which you all know although it is no longer in use: a relatively small property qualification. How's that? You don't have to be rich to be a full-fledged citizen. You must have some property. And on the other hand, you cannot be simply poor because otherwise you wouldn't have . . . Now how does this work out in practice? You make it a rule that you don't indicate the property qualification in terms of dollars and cents or whatever the Greek equivalent might have been, but you say only those can be citizens who can do a certain service to the *polis* which only people of some property can do. And this service means infantry, but the real infantry: hoplites, men using heavy arms and equipping themselves with it. So[5] polity is therefore identical with the preponderance of the military power of the city, because the hoplites were regarded as the queen of battles. So you have the rule of the hoplites—I mean of course then also of the older ones who had been hoplites; that doesn't affect the principle. And now you[6] make a strange observation. On the lowest level you had rich and poor: morally indifferent qualities. I mean, Aristotle did not believe that the rich are the rational and industrious part of the society and the poor are the lazy and irrational, as John Locke tried to believe.[iii] Aristotle saw that is morally irrelevant, because wealth can be acquired also by unjust means, as you know. But here we have now a premium on a moral quality: to be *the* defenders of the *polis*. In other words, military virtue; and that is a virtue, an important virtue. That is not the highest virtue; and therefore if we are wise, Aristotle suggests, let us look whether we cannot find another mean between democracy and oligarchy which is also as a mean higher than [LS evidently gestures at the blackboard] but still higher than polity. [LS writes on the blackboard.] That is aristocracy.

In an aristocracy there would be men, that is the general idea, who are compelled, you can say, by their social function not only to be the embodiment of military virtue but of all-around virtue. That's the scheme. So we have also taken care of aristocracy [LS evidently gestures at blackboard] The monarchic forms remain. What shall we do with them? We have to treat them

[iii] Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 34.

separately, and that is in a way what Aristotle does in the *Politics*. In other words, Aristotle's *Politics* as a whole bears witness to the fact that the *polis* is fundamentally republican—republican not in the sense of the G.O.P., but in opposition to monarchist; and therefore you can say the great question mark is: What about monarchy? What about monarchy? Tyranny is relatively uninteresting because that means something lousy, if I may say so, and that is simply a bad form. But what about kingship? That becomes in a way the great theoretical problem, and therefore it is treated right in the third book, as you will see. Generally speaking, there is one book, book 5, dealing with the so-called revolutions in which all regimes are discussed, whether they are monarchical or republican. But otherwise the *Politics* is a republican book and has only the end of the third book devoted to kingship. That we must keep in mind.

Now Aristotle begins then the more serious investigation, the more substantive investigation with the investigation of oligarchy and democracy. Oligarchy misses what democracy has got. Democracy misses what oligarchy has got. That's obvious, but that is not the full story. They both miss the same thing, and that shows that they are on the same level, inferior to something higher—that the mean, in other words, must be higher than the two extremes. What is the decisive thing? Both miss the fact that the *polis* exists for the sake of the good life. If the *polis* were to exist only for the sake of living together, democracy would be sufficient. If the *polis* existed for the sake of the protection of property, the oligarchs would be right. But in fact the *polis* exists for the sake of the good life. Now the good life means here always in Aristotle [what it means] here, the noble life. Good life does not mean to wallow in ice cream and other luxuries but to do noble deeds. The *polis* is not for the sake of mutual defense only. Then each one would count as everyone else, nor for the mutual exchange of goods and services. That is not sufficient. Now let us read this passage. It is in 1280a, towards the end of that. Mr. Reinken, you are such a supreme reader, won't you read?

Mr. Reinken: Article 6, page 118.
But the end of the state is not mere life; it is, rather, a good quality of life. [If mere life were the end], there might be a state of slaves, or even a state of animals; but in the world as we know it any such state is impossible, because slaves and animals do not share in true felicity and free choice [i.e. the attributes of a good quality of life]. Similarly, it is not the end of the state to provide an alliance for mutual defence against all injury, or to ease exchange and promote economic intercourse. If that had been the end, the Etruscans and the Carthaginians [who are united by such bonds] would be in the position of belonging to a single state— [iv] (1280a31-38)

LS: In other words, two independent cities who have some arrangement for the exchange of goods and services would by this very fact be a *polis*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and the same would be true of all peoples who have commercial treaties with one another. It is true that such peoples have agreements about imports and exports; treaties to ensure just conduct [in the course of trade]; and written terms of alliance for mutual defence. On the other hand they have no common offices of state to deal with these

[iv] The phrases in brackets are inserted by Barker. The previous readers omitted them.

matters: each, on the contrary, has its own offices, confined to itself. Neither of the parties concerns itself to ensure a proper quality of character among the members of the other; neither of them seeks to ensure that all who are included in the scope of the treaties shall be free from injustice and from any form of vice; and neither of them goes beyond the aim of preventing its own members from committing injustice [in the course of trade] against the members of the other. (1280a38-b5)

LS: Yes, "in the course of trade." That is an addition of Barker. Yes, it's very bad because in order to—

Mr. Reinken: Should I leave out the brackets?

LS: Ya, I think it's better.

Mr. Reinken:
But it is the cardinal issue of goodness or badness in the life of the *polis* which always engages the attention of any state that concerns itself to secure a system of good laws well obeyed. The conclusion which clearly follows is that any *polis* which is truly so called, and is not merely one in name, must devote itself to the end of encouraging goodness. Otherwise, a political association sinks into a mere alliance, which only differs in space from other forms of alliance where the members live at a distance from one another. (1280b5-11)

LS: In other words, it is an alliance of people living together, and not an alliance of people living in distant areas. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Otherwise, too, law becomes a mere covenant—or[v] 'a guarantor of men's rights against one another'—instead of being, as it should be, a rule of life such as will make the members of a *polis* good and just. (1280b11-13)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now the word which Barker translates by goodness is *aretē*, which is ordinarily translated by virtue. Now I can't blame Barker for trying to avoid virtue, because the word has become ridiculous, if I may say so. But goodness is also a bit misleading. If you want to avoid—I use virtue as a translation without any hesitation and brave the ridicule, but if one does not want to do that, then one should say excellence, which is a much better translation. Now let us stop here. That is a crucial passage.

The *polis* does not exist for the sake of mutual defense and mutual exchange of goods and services but also, and above all, for the sake of human excellence. Aristotle sketches here an alternative view. You omitted the reference to the sophist Lycophron.[vi] That is in Aristotle. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Lycophron. He . . . differently—he said the city exists merely for the sake of defense or for the exchange of goods and services and therefore the law is a covenant, a

[v] In Barker: "(in the phrase of the Sophist Lycophron)"
[vi] There is a brief inaudible exchange between Strauss and Mr. Reinken.

contract. He implied the whole *polis* is a contract. The people made a contract with one another for the defense, for their mutual defense and for the exchange of goods and services. Aristotle rejects that. Now he makes another point which is more interesting. These other people, not only theoreticians like Lycophron but many practical people, many citizens, understand the *polis* in this way; and they admit of course the necessity of justice. I mean, if the basic moral or political fact is a contract then you have, of course, to perform the stipulations of the contract. You have to keep the contract, and that is justice. So in such a *polis* the people are concerned with everyone's performing his duties, i.e., with everyone's acting justly. That's obvious; Aristotle does not deny that. But he says that acting justly is one thing and being just is something very different, and in such a contractual city people are not concerned with the citizens' being just. Do you understand the difference? Well, if you understand it, explain it to us. What is the difference between a man who acts justly and is not just, and the man who is just?

Student: Well, I would think that the difference implied is that there's a difference between the way a man behaves when with others and the way the man actually is.

LS: Yes, that is—but can you?

Different Student: Well, a person who was acting justly might just do so because of the consequences . . .

LS: Sure. For example, fear of punishment or concern with being elected next time. So he must have a good record. But the just man would be a man who loves justice. Even if it is disadvantageous to him to act justly, he would still do it. Yes?

Student: I was trying to think or trying to determine when you asked me that question what the difference in the consequences for the community would be with a person, between a person who acts justly and a person who is just and that's what I couldn't really see.

LS: Ya, but does it not make, individually, a difference whether the fellow acts justly, never cheats on taxes or in any other respect, merely because of either the reward and punishment or because it's terribly inconvenient also to be a crook. I mean, look at it realistically. You have to think much more about all trivial things to keep out of the clutches of justice and become dependent on shyster lawyers—really, elaborate it, you see it is highly undesirable to be a criminal. But someone else might—and the other man who loves justice and justice is only a part of virtue; he loves virtue. So, for example, it has also to do with—look at the gangsters. We all have very good access to that through movies and TV, and our own imagination. But I gather that when they have loot, then what do they do with it? Do they take a course in the Basic Program of the University of Chicago downtown?[vii] I don't think so. [Laughter] But they go to places where they drink and have real orgies. So in other words, that kind of life seems, this kind of injustice seems to go together with intemperance. And also I have been given to understand that they are not men who have any delicacy of feeling. You can say that.

[vii] That is, the Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults.

So let us then try to summarize it. A society which is concerned with a certain moral tone of all its members within the limits of the possible is one thing; another which insists only on the bare minimum demands which must be complied with if there is to be any exchange of goods and services: that's quite different. That's the point. Now[7] we draw now another conclusion, referring back to something we discussed on an earlier occasion, I mean, that Aristotle is, as we know, a man living in Greece who knows absolutely nothing of thermonuclear bombs and so on and so on, and therefore can be of no help to us. He didn't know anything of modern society. In a way that is absolutely true, but in another way it is not true, because the view which Aristotle sketches here and rejects is a modern view. In ancient times it existed, as is shown by what Aristotle says, but in modern times it became theoretically victorious. Do you recognize a modern theoretician who said the end of society for the sake of commodious living or comfortable self-preservation and the civil society has no other function but to make this living together possible?

Student: Well, Bentham said it.

LS: Ya, Bentham is one, but there are some greater names. Pardon?

Student: Locke.

LS: Locke, surely. And Hobbes. So in other words, Aristotle understood the principle of Locke without ever having read it [laughter] and there are certain niceties in Locke which are very important of which he did not know; and therefore one has to reconsider Aristotle's argument and say whether it still stands up against Locke, fully understood as Locke himself meant it. I mention here only one point. Let us take Aristotle's moral doctrine. Can we reduce to a somewhat difficult equation—because it is not simply an equation and I don't know a good mathematical expression for that—but I present it as a simple equation. H = V, meaning happiness is identical with virtue. Well, this is not quite so simple, [as] Aristotle makes very well clear in the first book of the *Ethics* especially, but substantially that is what he means. We cannot become happy except by being virtuous. Whether virtue is in all cases sufficient is a hard question. There is the case of Priam of Troy, who was supposed to be a virtuous man, and you know his terrible fate.[viii] That creates a problem. But still, basically happiness is virtue. Now what do the opponents, the modern opponents of Aristotle say? What do they say? Locke, let us . . . it at Locke. What does Locke say about happiness?

Student: He talks of pursuing it but he doesn't talk about finding it.

LS: Yes, that is one point, but the more important point, I believe, is that he says happiness, in our jargon of today, happiness is entirely subjective. For Aristotle, happiness is not subjective. Genuine happiness consists in virtue. If someone says: I find my happiness in stamp collecting, Aristotle would say: You are a very thoughtless man. Otherwise you would not find your happiness in stamp collecting although you might enjoy stamp collecting, but from Hobbes's point of view it is possible to say this man becomes happy through stamp collecting. At any rate, happiness is entirely subjective. How can you have a political science on that basis, if the end of

[viii] *Iliad*, book 24.

man differs from individual to individual? You all know it from today; [8]you can have it only in a very reduced way: the value-free social science.[9] Locke didn't believe that. Locke said, in spite of the subjectivity of happiness, there is something objective, universally valid, applying to all men. I give you a simple example. You cannot be happy if you are not alive. You cannot pursue your happiness (at least in most cases, as most of you understand it) if you are prevented from circulation. So you must also have the freedom of circulation. Freedom, and there are some other things.[10] While happiness is radically subjective, the basic conditions of that happiness are objective. They are the same for all. And these basic conditions of happiness are the aim of political society. And here we come to the point which was raised by—I forgot your name—pursuit of happiness. Surely, if you don't have the right to pursue happiness, you cannot become happy. You may understand by happiness what you want, but you must have the right to pursue that happiness, however you might understand happiness. Therefore life, liberty, pursuit of happiness are the universally valid conditions of human happiness, conditions of happiness, and they can be and must be secured by civil society. That's the position of the Declaration of Independence—basically, Locke. Ya, but what is the consequence of that? I would like to add only one little point as a kind of comment on this famous formula of the Declaration. I believe that Jefferson meant by happiness, and not only Jefferson but some other people too, happiness, really how you understand it, i.e., including also the happiness in the other world. Now the pursuit of happiness in some other world is popularly known as religion, and therefore I believe that Jefferson meant by it also the freedom of religion, which was as you know one of his major preoccupations. But this only in passing. Let us return to that.

Now we have this situation: civil society has the function of guaranteeing life, liberty and pursuit of happiness to everyone. Civil society does not have the function to guarantee happiness. That is a welfare state, and the framers of the Constitution or of the Declaration of Independence were not welfare-statist, as we all know and we hear every day now. So the actual pursuit of happiness as distinguished from the right to pursue it is everyone's private business. Now obviously, happiness is more important than the conditions of happiness. What is the use of your life and liberty and the right to pursue happiness if you are miserable? On the other hand, if you are happy, you have life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the bargain. So we have now a distinction on the basis of this strictly speaking liberal doctrine, because I believe we should not define liberal according to the fashions of each political situation but in a more principled way, and that is, I think, the liberal view: that society is founded for the purpose of safeguarding certain basic rights of man. Whether you call them natural rights or not is a secondary question here. Now, so to repeat: happiness is no longer an affair of the state. That's an affair for every individual. But this happiness if you look at it more concretely, is not one which the individual achieves in isolation. For example, you know this from the literature, that sometimes people cannot find happiness if they do not have another human being to share in happiness: popularly, marriage. And there are also other things called friendship; and there is also the other thing of the man who is concerned, who finds his happiness in becoming rich. He cannot do that in isolation: he needs employees, he needs business partners and so on and so on. So we have then not merely isolated individuals actually pursuing their happiness but individuals cooperating with one another in a way not regulated by the state. Do you see what I'm driving at? Now what is the name for that, for the individuals—pardon?

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, that's the legal expression, but as the thing which comes out of it.

Student: Society.

LS: Society. So in other words, the liberal concept absolutely stands and falls by this distinction between state and society, with the understanding, although that is not always clear, that society is higher because the state guarantees only the conditions of happiness. The happiness itself can only be found in society; and therefore from this point of view it follows necessarily that the political is more basic but also less interesting. The interest is social, not political. Now this, of course, is in constant conflict with the basic facts of human life, because when we look around we see that all of us, I believe, admire most not those[11] who are successful in pursuing their happiness as businessmen or whatever they may be, but those who guarantee the foundations of that pursuit: the esteem for the founding fathers in this country, or also Lincoln, for example, is by far superior to that esteem in which any other individual is held. In other words, we still know in a way that the real McCoy is not the social, but the political; but on the other hand we also have this situation that from another point of view the social appears to be superior. You see what I wanted to show was this: that it is possible to give an analysis of this stratum of modern thought as only one stratum, on the basis of Aristotle, and therefore perhaps to go on and raise the question: Who is right, Locke or Aristotle? But that would surely go beyond our present possibilities.[ix]

—and therefore friendship is necessary. Friendship produces and is the condition for living together, but friendship is more than that. Friendship is a kind of union, and friendship is essentially a union in something higher than self-interest. You can also speak of business friendships, Aristotle himself tells us [that] in his analysis of friendship in the *Ethics*, but that is surely not genuine friendship because that is a conditional form of friendship. As soon as it is no longer lucrative, the friendship stops. Now let us go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
A *polis* is constituted by the association of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing existence; and such an existence, on our definition, consists in a life of true felicity and goodness. (1281a1-3)

LS: Yes," in our definition"—that alone gives it a terribly academic character, you know, "definition." "As we assert," Aristotle says.

Mr. Reinken:
It is therefore for the sake of good actions, and not for the sake of social life, that political associations must be considered to exist. (1281a3-4)

LS: Let us stop here. He doesn't say good actions but noble actions. "Good actions" is ambiguous. The noble actions, and noble actions means—what's the relation of noble action to virtue? Simply this: noble actions are the exercise of virtue. Virtue is itself a habit which may be

[ix] The tape was changed at this point.

dormant. If it is exercised, it issues, it shows itself in noble action. The *polis* exists for the common pursuit of excellence. That's the Aristotelian view. From this, therefore, there is a decisive consequence regarding the regime: the most excellent men are those who have the highest right to rule. If the *polis* is an association for the common pursuit of excellence, then the most excellent men are the natural rulers. That is the Aristotelian argument. Go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Those who contribute most to an association of this character have a greater share in the *polis* than those who are equal to them (or even greater) in free birth and descent, but unequal in civic excellence, or than those who surpass them in wealth but are surpassed by them in excellence. (1281a4-8)

LS: Now let us stop here. In other words, all kinds of people raise claims to rule on various grounds. A man says: I'm a free man; I was born here and my parents were here before and so on. That's one thing. The others say: I'm rich. Who is paying the taxes? That was an analogon of the taxes: Who takes care of the ships, of the navy, [who] built the navy and built the temples? The rich. They are the benefactors of the city, more than any poor man can be, as you would expect. And Aristotle says no, the highest claim is that of the men of excellence even if they are inferior in freedom and in birth, meaning in nobility of descent. But still it is understood and implied here [that] the others too have some claim, and that is[12] what the great problem for Aristotle is. On the first level of the argument there can be no question. The men of excellence have the natural right to rule. Why can we not leave it at that? That would be elegant and of mathematical clarity. Why can't we leave it at that? Why must we give some right to the other claims too?

Student: Because the fact that they have some money implies that they also make a contribution to . . . the society.

LS: That is very nice of you to put it this way. One can express it a tougher way. Now let us see what you have to say.

Student: . . . excellent people.

LS: Yes, well, still all right. Let the excellent rule the nonexcellent.

Student: But there are not enough excellent people, and Aristotle . . .

LS: Oh, that is not so—well, all right. Then we cannot perhaps not have a *polis*, if—

Student: They also have a certain amount of power which they—

LS: Now you are talking. So they make themselves felt; and that is the point and we will see further developments of that later on. A bit later, where you left off. A bit later; it's probably a new paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:
A difficulty arises when we turn to consider what body of persons should be sovereign in the *polis*: the people at large; the wealthy; the better sort of men; the one man who is best of all; the tyrant. But all these alternatives appear to involve unpleasant results: indeed, how can it be otherwise? What if the poor, on the ground of their being a majority, proceed to divide among themselves the possessions of the wealthy—will not this be unjust? 'No, by heaven' (a democrat may reply); 'it has been justly decreed so by the sovereign.' (1281a12-17)

LS: Now let us stop here. Well, "the democrat might reply" is Barker's addition; Aristotle doesn't say that. Yes, but I'm sorry; I have the text here.[x] Aristotle simply says what the democrat replies without saying that the democrat replies it; you understand that from the context. And he doesn't say "by heaven," he says: "By Zeus." [Laughter] Not as a democrat, by the way, but as a political man. You see here and shortly afterward there is another sermon by Zeus. These are the only sermons occurring in the Aristotelian writings. It's very interesting. They occur in Aristotle's imitation of political debate. You see, when Aristotle speaks about the nature of frogs or about the essence of motion, and he argues all the time, that is always disputative or dialectical. But he never swears. I mean, as if we would now, in arguing about Aristotle, someone would say "that is also by God," that wouldn't carry any weight. But in political discussions these things come up because they carry—why do they carry weight in political debates or in quasi-political debates, whereas they do not carry any weight in theoretical debates? Why do they do that?

Student: Because emotion comes into the political debate.

LS: Yes, but still, who cares for emotions? Why are the emotions legitimately regarded as strengthening the cause of the argument? I mean, if someone gives a mathematical demonstration and would swear, I mean, that would be wholly impertinent. But if in a political debate, sermons, oaths, or equivalents of them are pertinent, how come? I mean, they are a kind of argument. How come? Perhaps they show how strongly people feel about it, and the strength of the feeling is of course a political fact. I mean, if people have an attitude, as they say today, that can be very lukewarm and of no political importance, but it can also be a great political power and that is indicated, for example, by the use of powerful language.

So here Aristotle gave a sketch of the democratic argument and refutes it at the same time, as he had done before in a different form. The democrats say the *dēmos* has reached this decision and the *dēmos* is sovereign, but that doesn't mean a thing. The decision may be wholly unjust. I mean, whatever you may think about majority decisions,[13] the majority principle does not guarantee the justice of the majority decisions. The majority principle may be a sound rule of thumb, but it can never be more because there is no guarantee that the majority as a majority will be right or just. That is clear. And you see also the swearing: the partisan, the excited man, and this indicates again what Aristotle is. Aristotle is the arbiter, the calm arbiter between excited people. That is his function.

[x] There is a brief inaudible exchange here between Strauss and Mr. Reinken.

Now then he gives in the sequel—in this case we cannot go into all that—the argument, to repeat, is decided in favor of the men of excellence, the men of virtue, the better sort, as they were called in former times. Still, can we leave it at the sole rule of the better sort? Would this not lead to the consequence that the majority is disfranchised, therefore dissatisfied, and therefore will be inclined to put down the rule of the better sort? Furthermore, if there is an inherent right of the better sort to rule in their own right, then we arrive at the conclusion that the best individual has a still higher right than the better sort, and he should be the sole ruler. People are aware of that and therefore they say: No, you put the question wrong. No human being should rule. The law should rule—a demand which always makes a great impression, but Aristotle thinks it is wholly insufficient, and why? Why can we not say rule of laws? Yes?

Student: The law itself may be interpreted . . . in terms of oligarchic or democratic interests. In other words, be inclined one way or the other.

LS: That's true, but not sufficient.

Student: Well, the laws could be good or bad, either—bad laws—

LS: The right is not in all situations but the right is just between what you said. It is not the mere administration of the law, it is the giving of the laws. The question who is the ruler means ultimately who is the lawgiver, and the laws will not be politically neutral. They will be democratic laws, oligarchic laws . . . and therefore the recourse to the rule of laws is theoretically wholly inadequate, and therefore the regime is the crucial consideration. You cannot leave it at the laws. The laws are derivative from the lawgiver and the lawgiver, in modern language, is the sovereign, and the sovereign differs in an oligarchy or a democracy, tyranny, what have you. And therefore the real political question is: Who ought to be the sovereign? Who ought to be the lawgiver? The question of the laws, very important, is however only a secondary question.

Now then Aristotle argues and gives the argument in favor of the rule of the multitude; we can say the democratic argument. The main point: collective wisdom is superior to the wisdom of any individual. Let us look; there is one passage which is particularly interesting in 1281b. Why don't you read paragraph 3?

Mr. Reinken: Article 3, bottom of [page] 123.
This is the reason why the Many are also better judges of music and the writings of poets: some appreciate one part, some another, and all together appreciate all. The thing which makes a good man differ from a unit in the crowd—as it is also the thing which is generally said to make a beautiful person differ from one who is not beautiful, or an artistic representation differ from ordinary reality—is that elements which are elsewhere scattered and separate are here combined in a unity; for if you take the elements separately, you may say of an artistic representation that it is surpassed by the eye of this person or by some other feature of that.

It is not clear, however, that this combination of qualities, which we have made the ground of distinction between the many and the few best, is true of all popular bodies and all large masses of men. (1281b17-18)

LS: Now let us stop here. The point which he makes here: surely an individual may be by far superior in wisdom to all others, and his wisdom may be superior to the collective wisdom, but only in parts, in partial matters, i.e., these outstanding individuals are so-called experts, but what we understand by political wisdom is not wisdom of experts. That is a part of the democratic argument which Aristotle does not fully adopt, by no means, which he rather reports and analyzes and which he regards as useful up to a point. The conclusion which we draw then is that Aristotle does not accept the argument in favor of the multitude, even here. Some multitudes, civilized multitudes may have this character, and the practical solution as it was stated by Mr. Hurst in his paper: it is a perfectly defensible view to say that multitudes of a certain caliber are capable to form the popular assembly and there to give the laws and deliberate generally and also act as jurymen, but they must not be elected to the highest offices. What this in practice would mean, I believe, is this: the laws would be prepared by a council and this council would not be—I mean, that would also be an aristocratic institution, and so that the right of the multitude would be rather to ratify or not ratify the laws, but they would have no influence on the legislation itself.

Then Aristotle goes on in this argument and raises the question: Can the unwise, the multitude, judge? For example, a physician is to be elected; and must you not be a physician to judge of a physician? Must you not be a political scientist to judge of political scientists? Now the multitude consists of non-knowers, admittedly. How can we get out of that circle? The Aristotelian solution is the classic solution. In many cases, you are even a better judge if you are not an expert, on this ground: because the experts are meant to serve the nonexperts, and only the nonexperts can decide whether they serve well. Simple case: A shoemaker is an expert. The non-shoemakers are not experts in shoes, but the decisive judgment on the work of the shoemaker is the judgment of the nonexpert, of the wearer of the shoe. The shoemakers may all say that is the most magnificent shoemaker we have ever seen; he produces shoes in no time and out of the most unpromising material, and what have you. But if the buyers of these shoes say we can't wear the shoes, they are right—and not only from a democratic point of view, but obviously. Pardon?

Student: Does Aristotle accept this?

LS: Yes, sure.

Student: Then he would be accepting a subjective evaluation.

LS: How is this a subjective evaluation, when you can't walk in the shoes?

Student: If he accepts the principle that excellence is to be determined by the wearer—

LS: Not in every respect. For example, let us take a man who is completely unable to appreciate these things. For example, regarding shoes, every wearer of shoes can judge, and every man (or at least almost every man, to be exact) can be a wearer of shoes. But if it is a matter of poetry, for example, every man can listen to poetry, but is everyone equally able to judge of a poetic work? It's a different case. The cruder the things, the more general is the judgment; and political

matters are partly very crude and therefore everyone can be the judge. But other things are not very crude in politics and therefore the difficulty.

Student: Political matters, you say, are essentially—

LS: No, not essentially, *many* political matters are crude.

Student: Because it seems to have a conflict . . . that politics is to serve virtue.

LS: Yes, sure. That is the limit of popular competence according to Aristotle, because most people would say that if we get the right kind of shoes, metaphorically understood, which we can wear conveniently . . . that's all we want from government. But the government must do more to be truly government. Quite a few people would be dissatisfied with a government which would do not more than that. Take another example, also from everyday life:[14] not everyone's eyes are hurt if he sees fantastic advertisements on billboards on the highways. Not everyone is hurt by the atrocious singing commercials on the TV, and if then you will say since people like it—and[15] the majority of people might even like perhaps so-called obscene things, obscene literature.[16] Or to take a simple example: How come that the spitting is abolished, say, and is forbidden in subways, for example? Is this simply due to the popular will as such? I really doubt it. If at a certain point physicians had not entered and had had a decisive say which did not impose too great a hardship on the commuters, it might never have gone through, and so on.[17] But your question is in one point very pertinent, because it gives us an inkling why Aristotle does not leave it at the democratic argument. He presents here an argument for democracy which seems to be foolproof, and yet without an apparent reason he goes on to an argument which leads to absolute monarchy. And he doesn't give us a reason; we have to discover the reason for ourselves. You got one point there in what you said. Now let us see. We have to read at the beginning of 1282b there is one point which we—1282b.

Mr. Reinken:
But the discussion of the first of these difficulties leads to one conclusion above all others. Rightly constituted laws should be the final sovereign; and personal rule, whether it be exercised by a single person or a body of persons, should be sovereign only in those matters on which law is unable, owing to the difficulty of framing general rules for all contingencies, to make an exact pronouncement. But what rightly constituted laws ought to be is a matter that is not yet clear; and here we are still confronted by the difficulty stated at the end of the previous chapter—that law itself may have a bias in favour of one class or another. Equally with the constitutions to which they belong laws must be good or bad, just or unjust. The one clear fact is that laws must be constituted in accordance with constitutions; and if this is the case it follows that laws which are in accordance with right constitutions must necessarily be just, and laws which are in accordance with wrong or perverted constitutions must be unjust. (1282b8-13)

LS: That is a more emphatic statement regarding the derivative character of laws. Laws, just as the citizen, are relative to the regime. The fundamental fact is the regime, and therefore if the regime is fundamentally wrong the laws must be wrong too, except accidentally and vice versa. Now that is one reason why one should not speak of constitutions, because when you speak of

constitutions now, especially in this country, you mean a law, the fundamental law of the land. For Aristotle, the regime is not a law. It is a factual order of the society in regard to rule which necessarily will find a legal expression, but the legal expression is absolutely derivative from the fundamental fact.

And there is another point regarding the regime which I should have mentioned last time, but there was so much material that I could not possibly go into everything. There is this phrase [that] occurred which is translated generally and I think also by Barker: What is the constitution? Answer: the constitution is the government. The constitution is the government. Ya, but what does that mean? I mean, does it make sense to say the constitution is the government? In this country, we would of course say the constitution, the government is by virtue of the constitution the legitimate government. They are two different things. What does Aristotle mean? Now in the first place he doesn't speak of government. The word which he uses is *politeuma*. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Now this word is grammatically a form exactly like another word, *strateuma*, which means army. *Politeuma* is something like an army. It is the body, the citizen body. The regime is the citizen body. Now what does that mean? In every city you have[18] many human beings, but not all human beings living in a city form a part of the citizen body: for example, not children, and not resident aliens and so on. So therefore in every city the question arises: Who forms a part of the citizen body? And this citizen body can have very different structures. For example, you can have a structure which has this character [LS writes on the on blackboard] and so on. One man, one vote, without any further qualifications: democracy. Or you can have it in this form . . . cases, in other words, really stratified. And then it can be a number of things but in the most desirable case the stratification, the social stratification, would correspond to the natural stratification, if I may use the old-fashioned language, so that those who deserve to be higher are in fact higher. That would be aristocracy, and the other things would be somehow in between. That's the point. The difficulty arises in a strict monarchy where the only one who has the right to deliberate, to give laws, to judge, would be one man; and all others—no one would be a citizen. And it would be rather absurd to say that the absolute king or the tyrant is the only citizen. No, men are not so foolish. They use other expressions, then, as you know from the British. They say they don't speak of citizens, they speak of subjects. That is the simple semantic solution to this difficulty. Therefore this remark only confirms what I said before. Aristotle's concern is chiefly, not to say exclusively, with republics, with societies in which you have a citizen body in control and that is the regime.

Now one more word and then we are through. Let us read the beginning of the next paragraph or chapter, where we left off. No, immediately where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
In all arts and sciences the end in view is some good. In the most sovereign of all the arts and sciences—and this is the art and science of politics—the end in view is the greatest good and the good which is most pursued. (1282b14-16)

LS: Let us stop here. That is truly a new beginning. I mean, that is the way in which Aristotle begins books—I mean, not individual books or parts of a book, but whole books: a real incision, something entirely new. What is happening? The issue, who should rule, has been settled apparently in favor of democracy properly qualified as I said before. But then there is here a new

beginning, and this beginning speaks emphatically of the sciences and arts. Shortly afterward there are two references to philosophy. Somehow, in a way which we must try to understand,[19] the overall view of politics is decisively affected by our reminding ourselves of the fact of science. Science doesn't mean quite the same thing there as it means now, but there is of course a kinship between these two notions. I exaggerate greatly in order to make things clear. The quasi-democratic solution would be sufficient if there were no science. That forces us to reconsider the whole issue. We can say this: Science or arts (the distinction is here not important), the difference between science and arts on the one hand, and political things such as laws in particular on the other, that is one of the fundamental themes of Aristotle. We have come across it when we discussed Hippodamus's proposal in the second book—you know, in favor of inventions, where Aristotle says the case of laws and sciences and the case of laws differ. That is one fundamental theme, and the other fundamental theme is that which we have discussed to some extent today and last time: the difference between the *polis* and the regime. And we will reach a deeper stratum of the understanding of Aristotle when we see that there is a connection between these two fundamental themes. The distinction between *polis* and regime on one hand, and the distinction between science and laws, science and political things on the other hand. So next time, we will take this up. Mr. Gray will have his paper ready at the peril that he might not read it next time and the same applies also to Mr. Warden.

Session 8: April 21, 1960
Natural right; the kinds of regimes (book 4)

Leo Strauss: Yes, that is the question which you raised at the end of the last meeting. Now let us first see the distinction between laws and decrees. That is very simple. A decree corresponds to what we can call a measure. I mean a measure—for example, the declaration of war, or anything of this kind,[1] a decision which is made now and not with the intention of permanence. A law is meant to be a permanent solution. Therefore decrees have something in common with judicial decisions, where this individual is condemned on the basis of law. So all decrees presuppose the laws, presuppose that it is made by the competent authorities and that is determined not by decree. Ya, but the laws presuppose themselves the regime. The laws presuppose a legislator, and the legislator as the origin of all laws is ultimately not limited by laws. You know what the modern doctrine of sovereignty says. Because he who can make laws can unmake them and since he has to—one cannot possibly draw a line on which subject he may or may not make laws; the unforeseeable changes in circumstances. Therefore he must be considered to be omnicompetent. I mean, Aristotle—of course the ancients never developed the doctrine of sovereignty—that's interesting enough, that they didn't—but something of this kind is implied.

So we come back to the legislator. Now the legislator differs from regime to regime. In a democracy, it's the citizen body. In a monarchy, it's the king; and [there are] all intermediate possibilities. What is behind the regime? Politically, socially: nothing. It's the ultimate fact. Once you go beyond the regime you come into a kind of chaos where there is not yet any social order, or there is a subpolitical order, individual families or clans but not yet a civil society. But is the regime not subject to any higher thing? To which Aristotle would say yes, it is, as is shown by the fact that we are compelled to distinguish between good and bad regimes. Therefore there are criteria in light of which we can make that distinction. But do these criteria have the character of law? Answer: no. In other words, there is no natural law strictly speaking in Aristotle. For Aristotle there is something corresponding to the natural law, but it is not natural law, and that is, we can say, the natural order of ends, of human ends. There is a natural order of higher and lower among them and that is a natural order, not an order depending in any way on human arbitrariness. But this is not the same as a natural law. Well, there are various reasons which one could give. A natural law would presuppose a legislator of the natural law, and that could only be god. Now the Aristotelian god is not a legislating god in any sense. God does not rule, Aristotle says occasionally, by issuing commands, commands including laws. He rules by being what he is, by being the end of everything else, not by legislating. That's one reason which is not altogether negligible, but there are other reasons. Aristotle speaks of natural right in the *Ethics*. Now let me state this whole issue as far as it is possible within the compass of a few remarks.

The Aristotelian statements on natural law or natural right occur in two writings of his. One is the *Rhetoric* and the other is the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[i] Now in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle does not present his own teaching, but he presents those principles to which orators refer in debates—political, judicial or whatever they may be—and there an appeal to a higher law, to a natural law,

[i] *Rhetoric* 1373b; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1134b-1135a.

was common in Greece, and Aristotle therefore presents this way of arguing as he would any other. But that does not present the Aristotelian teaching. In the *Ethics*, there is a remark where Aristotle surely speaks in his own name, but this is one page and perhaps the most obscure page in the whole *Ethics*. So it is very hard to interpret it, and the Thomistic interpretation, which is the most well-known in the West, is not fully borne out by what Aristotle says, because Aristotle says all right is changeable. And Thomas Aquinas says: Yes, that means all right is changeable except the principles of right; they are unchangeable. Aristotle does not say that; and therefore we have an alternative interpretation which was set forth by, especially by Averroes, an Arabic philosopher of the twelfth century [LS writes on the blackboard], Averroes, Ibn Rushd[ii]; and he lived about one century prior to Thomas, and the whole Thomistic doctrine is a kind of Christian reply to the Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle. Now Averroes understands Aristotle to mean that there is no natural right. There are certain general rules regarding which all political societies agree. They all forbid murder; they all forbid high treason and so on and so on. But that is not strictly speaking natural right according to Averroes. Averroes's doctrine, by the way, became known to the Christian world in this manner: through Marsilius of Padua[iii] [LS writes on the blackboard], Marsilius, who wrote around 1324 or so, that is to say about two generations after Thomas. Marsilius of Padua. And he presents this alternative interpretation of Aristotle more clearly, in greater detail than Averroes does. So what the conclusion which one must draw is this: it is very hard to find out what Aristotle understands by natural right. Aristotle, contrary—I mean, Averroes is wrong to that extent, that Aristotle speaks explicitly of natural right, whereas Averroes says that is not natural right. At least there is a difficulty here. That is more or less what we know about it. Everything else is interpretation, which means also there is no longer a literary support.

Now what does Aristotle understand by natural right, if we disregard this single reference in which there is not a single example, not a single example given, and so how can you know what Aristotle . . . ? Then we have to read the *Politics* as a whole, and there we would have to see what does he say about natural? And there we see, well, there are natural slaves; there is a certain natural order of superiority of the parents compared with the children; there is a certain superiority of the husband over the wife; a natural superiority of those who are by nature better over those who are by nature inferior. That is the content. But there is something else: the Aristotelian teaching regarding justice as a whole. Aristotle makes a distinction between, let us say, commutative justice and distributive justice. Commutation, where the simple case is buying and selling. From Aristotle's point of view there exists something which has come to be called the just or fair price. The just or fair price is not the market price; the market price may be very unfair—for example, in a period of famine, you know, where people pay exorbitantly much for a piece of bread. There is according to Aristotle a fair price, which can perhaps be stated to be a composite of the value of the raw material and of the labor involved in producing the thing; and you know that in scholasticism, the whole Catholic tradition, that played a very great role. And that is also—only one form of the fair price are fair wages. Fair wages are not the wages which you can get at the moment, but fair wages are [those] which really correspond to the quality and

[ii] Averroës, Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), philosopher and religious judge in Seville and Cordoba. He wrote a series of commentaries on Aristotle.

[iii] Marsilius of Padua (1275-1324), scholar, physician, theologian and political philosopher. Author of the influential *Defensor pacis* (*The Defender of Peace*) (1324).

character of the service performed, and so on. And commutative justice is basically the same as what we could call retributive justice. For example, if someone hurts another human being in a given way, then the hurter must get the same in value, in pain in this case, in loss, more generally stated, as the painee, if you can say that.

So in other words, the principle of commutative or retributive justice is simple arithmetic equality: gain must be equal to loss. The shoemaker gives away the pair of shoes: loss. What he must get back, the gain, must be equal to it. Distributive justice is more complicated. In distributive justice, you have to consider not only the things exchanged; for example, you hit someone over the head, there is an exchange of blows—take this in this wide sense. But there is a kind of justice where you have to consider also the persons, and where therefore there is not a simple equality but what Aristotle calls a proportionate or geometric equality. The simplest case here would be one which does occur in business relations; for example, two men share a business and have unequal shares in it from the very beginning. Then gain or loss must be distributed not by two equally, but proportionately. If one has four shares to begin with, [and] the other one [share], the gain or loss must be shared in the proportion of four to one. But the main place of distributive justice is public office or public honors. They cannot be distributed equally, that one gets as much as everyone else, but you have to consider the quality of the individuals involved. If someone is better, he must get more—not money but public honor, authority and so. Now these are principles—

That you can say is the concrete meaning of natural right for Aristotle because these principles of justice are not according to Aristotle dependent on the human legislator. On the contrary, the human legislator has to take his bearings by them. That's all very nice, but what about the statement in the section on natural right that all right is changeable? All right, hence also natural right. That ordinary civil right is changeable, everyone admits that. There is no problem. But how can these principles of justice be changed? That's the question. Well, one can say they are not always applicable. There are situations in which people are compelled to establish a democracy, i.e., a regime in which distributive justice proper is not practiced, where all have equally access to office regardless of merits. What happens here? In this situation—ya, that is the crucial point, I believe—in this situation you do not merely make a concession of expediency to justice. In such a situation, this concession itself is just. There is no conflict here in such a case that is truly necessary between expediency and justice, but justice itself is modified; and therefore, while there is a natural right, this natural right is changeable. Natural right properly and simply understood is not always applicable, and if it is not applicable then you are unjust by insisting on it because it cannot work. Something of this kind is, I believe, what Aristotle understood by natural right. Do you see that? So it remains, in a way, the criterion. It is the best order, but it cannot be unchangeably valid. Yes?

Student: Would law necessarily have to be the consequence of a conscious act? I'm thinking that perhaps the nature of reality would dictate that which would be conformable to that nature and in that respect, it would be a law.

LS: Yes. Can you give me a single example so that I understand what you mean?

Same Student: Well, you might take a democracy. They would be so composed, various elements in a democracy, so that certain laws conformable to that democracy would be dictated by the very nature of democracy, in other words, its essence.

LS: Ya, but then you get into other troubles as we will see at least next time, that there are various kinds of democracy.

Same Student: Well, each kind would dictate its own laws.

LS: Yes, but the moment you go into that you will come to the question of subdivision of the kinds, and it will become infinite. There is no use for that. One must, I think, leave it at saying that from Aristotle's point of view there is no natural law. There is something else, and that is reasonable decision. That is what you mean. For example, taking an individual of this subtype of democracy and you can perhaps say something which applies to all individuals of this sub-type. But this would be rational provisions for that subtype; it could not properly be called natural law because[2] in the first place, there is no natural tendency toward it which is also important, whereas even in the case of commutative justice in many cases the exchangers, but in all cases an unbiased spectator, would say that is fair and there is a certain sense of revolt, of indignation if that doesn't happen. But the main point, I think, is simply to make this clear: there is no—you see, I must mention another thing. The Greek word for law is *nomos*. Now the most fundamental thought in Greek philosophy is expressed by this distinction [LS writes on the blackboard]: *nomos*, *physis*; law, nature. The term natural law is to begin with a wooden iron. You know, what is by nature is not by convention and vice versa, and that is, of course, a very bold expression which was used by Plato in the *Timaeus*, for example.[iv] Today we are accustomed to it—"natural laws" also from modern science and so on, but that was to begin with a very bold and paradoxical combination.

Another example of this paradoxical character is given by Lucretius, the Roman–Epicurean poet, in his poem *On the Nature of Things*. He calls the natural laws (in the sense of Newton, let us say) the compacts of nature,[v] reminding us of the original meaning of law: that it is a human arrangement agreed upon by humans. That was a very bold thought. There was a school which developed after Aristotle and about which people say very much, much more than the texts warrant, and perhaps the magnitude of the talk stands in inverse proportion to what we know about it, and these were the so-called Stoics. You see we have no Stoic texts, that's the trouble. The Stoic texts we have are all very late—certain things in Cicero and especially Seneca. The early Stoics, the founders of the school; we have only very sketchy fragments of theirs. But there is no question that the Stoics used the term the natural law as a matter of course. What it means with them is a very difficult question. The term is, however, constantly used by them. Now is this sufficient as an answer? Was there—someone else raised a question at the end of the meeting last time. Yes?

[iv] *Timaeus* 83e.

[v] See the term *foedera naturai* in *On the Nature of Things*, 1.586, 2.302, 5.310.

Student: I believe that Aristotle says that the end of the state is virtue or excellence. Now you said that the modern notion is that the state . . . to secure the conditions for promoting this end . . .

LS: That has nothing to do with that. Thomas follows Aristotle substantially in the political teaching with certain interesting variations. Thomas is more monarchistic than Aristotle is, and some other kinds of things. But Thomas makes the distinction which is of course wholly alien to Aristotle between the felicity of this life and the true felicity in the other life. But when they speak about felicity politically they mean the felicity of this life, and there they agree. This other difference comes in only—not within politics proper, it comes in only when the question of the relation of the civil society and the church is concerned. There, naturally: there is no place for a church in Aristotle. It does not come in here. The felicity of the other life in Thomas Aquinas, which means the beatific vision, corresponds to the contemplative felicity, the felicity of the philosopher in Aristotle. But this felicity of the philosophers, felicity of contemplation, is as much transpolitical in Aristotle as it is in Thomas; therefore we can disregard the difference here. Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Couldn't it be argued that Thomas thinks that every man is capable of that felicity, and that in fact he is bound or obliged to prepare himself in this life by preparing his soul; and his soul is prepared on the instruction of the Church and not according to the instruction of—

LS: I do not know what present-day Catholic theologians say about that because I believe that democracy also has affected the Catholic teaching to some extent. For Thomas, the decisive point is this—I mean, the decisive consideration. Are men, by nature, equal or not? What does Thomas answer to that?

Student: . . .

LS: Even prior to the Fall, and wholly independent of the Fall, would men have been unequal; all the more as a consequence of the Fall. Whatever the equality of all men before God may mean, it has no political meaning, just as Thomas has no objection to the institution of slavery. No, I think it is intelligible that present-day Thomists try to give an interpretation of Thomas which is rather democratic. But on the other hand, we must make a distinction.[3] No, but I think this is true. But if we want to understand Thomas, we have to study Thomas and cannot take present-day democratic interpretations as substitutes for Thomas. That seems to me elementary, and that we have to do. I mean, for example, my colleague Yves Simon, of the Committee on Social Thought, who is a very conscientious scholar, gave once a survey of this in his book, *The Principles of Democratic Government*, but he makes it clear that Thomas was not a democrat.[vi] He only showed how a democratic teaching *could emerge* from Thomas. That's an entirely different proposition. Thomas himself was not a democrat.

Now there is—perhaps we take up one point with a view to the question raised first. We will return to that later, to that passage. That occurs in the fourth book. Let us turn to in the fourth

[vi] Yves R. Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (1951).

book, 1289b. You have no book; that's really disgraceful. Yes, I wish—you are such a good reader.[vii] 1289b; there is a brief polemics. The context is this: the various kinds of polities, of regimes are here spoken again.

Mr. Reinken:
One of our predecessors has already advanced the same view; but he used a different principle. On his principle all constitutions could have a good as well as a bad form: oligarchy, for example, could be good as well as bad; and going on this principle he ranked the good form of democracy as the worst of all the good forms of constitution, and the bad form of it as the best of all the bad. (1289b5-9)

LS: Now this someone was no less a man than Plato, and why he doesn't mention him here is not quite clear. Plato does this in the *Statesman*, 303a to b. So in other words, Plato said one kind of oligarchy can be better than another kind and Aristotle says that it's impossible to say that—seems to be mere semantic but we will see that it's something very serious. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
In our opinion those two constitutions, in any of their forms, are wholly on the side of error. It cannot properly be said that one form of oligarchy is better than another; it can only be said that one is not so bad as another. (1289b9-11)

LS: Yes, in other words, what Aristotle means is this: take two sick people; you can't say the[4] [one] is healthier than the other. Strictly speaking, you can only say he is less sick than the other. None of them is healthy. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But we may dismiss for the present this issue of the grading of constitutions in an order of merit. We have, first, to distinguish and enumerate the varieties of each type of constitution, on the assumption that democracy and oligarchy have each several different forms. Secondly, we have to examine what type of constitution—short of the ideal—is the most generally acceptable, and the most to be preferred; and here we must also examine whether, besides this general type, there is any other constitution to be found, of a more aristocratic and well-constructed character, but suitable, none the less, for adoption in most states. Thirdly, and in regard to constitutions generally, we have to inquire which constitution is desirable for which sort of civic body. It is possible, for instance, that democracy rather than oligarchy may be necessary for one sort of civic body, and oligarchy rather than democracy for another. (1289b12-20)

LS: Let us stop here. That's the point I meant. Aristotle has first engaged in a seemingly semantic discussion with Plato. Can you speak of a defective regime, say democracy, and say this democracy is better than that oligarchy? And Aristotle says: No, you can't speak of bad things, that one is better than the other; you can only say it's less bad than the other. And now he says: For some people democracy may be necessary, or for other people oligarchy may be necessary. Now but if it is necessary, you can't change that. You have to adopt it. But now let us

[vii] Mr. Reinken asks if anyone would lend him their book, and then he begins to read.

look at the other point: What is a defective regime in general? A regime directed toward the benefit of a section and not toward the common benefit. But[5] the badness of such a regime is identical with its injustice. So certain "in themselves" unjust regimes may be necessary. Generally stated, natural right is changeable. Natural right is clear as to what is better or inferior, but that is not sufficient for action. What is intrinsically good may be impossible under given circumstances. Aristotle was the opposite of a doctrinaire. That I should have brought up next time but since we had to discuss the Aristotelian teaching regarding natural right I thought it might be better to mention it now. Now let us return to the third book; if you will turn to 1282b, in this neighborhood, I'll tell you the precise passage very soon.

After Aristotle has made the distinction between the various regimes, he has come up with a disputation among the various claims to rule and this culminated in a qualified approval of democracy, a regime in which all citizens participate in the assembly and in jury duties but in which only a certain elite is in fact eligible for office. The mechanics of that will be brought out very clearly in the fourth book; we can dispense with that now. But then in 1282b14 (we had this last time) he makes a new beginning and a very radical beginning by speaking of all the sciences and arts, and he even refers in the immediate sequel twice to philosophy. Why then does Aristotle reopen the question, the whole question? And this reopening culminates in a plea for absolute monarchy. I suggest this tentative answer: hitherto we have completely disregarded science or philosophy—that's the same for Aristotle—and that means our discussion was too narrow. If we take science or philosophy into consideration we will have to revise the result of the previous discussion. Will you read a bit later on, where he says this subject has a difficulty and calls for political philosophy. Do you have that? About ten lines after—

Mr. Reinken:
But here there arises a question which must not be overlooked. Equals and unequals—yes; but equals and unequals *in what*? This is a question which raises difficulties, and involves us in philosophical speculation on politics. It is possible to argue that offices and honours ought to be distributed unequally on the basis of superiority *in any respect whatsoever*—even though there were similarity, and no shadow of any difference, in every other respect; and it may be urged, in favour of this argument, that where people differ from one another there must be a difference in what is just and proportionate to their merits. If this argument were accepted, the mere fact of a better complexion, or greater height, or any other such advantage would establish a claim for a greater share of political rights to be given to its possessor. But is not the argument obviously wrong? (1282b23-31)

LS: You know what Aristotle means: he says men are unequal, and while it is a rule of justice to treat equals equally it is also a rule of justice to treat unequals unequally. The only question is which equalities are relevant. For example, you can say beauty is—some men are beautiful, or women, and others are less beautiful; and you can say the beautiful should have the greatest share. You know[6] sometimes they look at candidates from the point of view of their beauty, or size, [and] Aristotle's answer says the error is obvious. Why is the error obvious? What would you say?

Student: . . . given the political situation . . . they must deal with . . .

LS: In other words, beauty is politically irrelevant, and size and so on. That's it. And therefore there is not a party of the beautiful and a party of the ugly. The ugly would perhaps have a nicer name for themselves. But that never happens, and that shows it's politically irrelevant and we have gradually to find what is the politically relevant things on the basis of which people can reasonably claim to have preferred treatment. But Aristotle does not proceed this way here. How does he go on? Let us read. He says the error is obvious, and how does he prove that the error is obvious?

Mr. Reinken:
To be clear that it is, we have only to study the analogy of the other arts and sciences. (1282b31-32)

LS: You see, Aristotle does not refer to politics. He refers to the other arts and sciences, in agreement with his beginning with the arts and sciences. Now what does he say?

Mr. Reinken:
If you were dealing with a number of flute-players who were equal in their art, you would not assign them flutes on the principle that the better born should have a greater amount. Nobody will play the better for being better born; and it is to those who are better at the job that the better supply of tools should be given. If our point is not yet plain, it can be made so if we push it still further. (1282b32-37)

LS: Yes, it should be clear by now. Well, Aristotle knows that in political matters people can be of hard hearing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Let us suppose a man who is superior to others in flute-playing, but far inferior in birth and beauty. Birth and beauty may be greater goods than ability to play the flute, and those who possess them may, upon balance, surpass the flute-player more in these qualities than he surpasses them in his flute-playing; but the fact remains that *he* is the man who ought to get the better supply of flutes. Superiority in a quality such as birth—or for that matter wealth—ought to contribute something to the performance of that function; and here these qualities contribute nothing to such performance. (1282b32-a3)

LS: Yes. Well, we have learned this: that wealth and noble birth are as such irrelevant in the arts and sciences. Are they irrelevant in politics? Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: He seems to say no in the last sentence.

LS: You mean he seems to say yes. They ought to be irrelevant in politics.

Mr. Reinken: They do contribute something to the performance of the function.

LS: As they do, but still he spoke only of sciences and arts and there they are irrelevant. Therefore he suggests,[7] apart from any further considerations, [that] since the political art is also an art, wealth and noble birth and beauty should be irrelevant in politics too. Yes?

Student: Doesn't he go on to suggest that there may be a relationship, though, between . . .

LS: Yes, sure. Aristotle was not a babe in the woods, but still, why does he go out of his way as it were to suggest to us for a moment the irrelevancy? Now I put this question to you: Did this subject come up before?

Student: Citizenship?

LS: In which form?

Student: His definition: he said that citizenship is not determined by geographical location, or by birth . . .

LS: Yes, but still there he said in an oligarchy this is determined by wealth, and in a democracy it is determined by birth, by origin . . . by being a free-born citizen. No, no; but something else. Where did this question of politics and the arts or sciences come up before?

Student: When he spoke about Hippodamus of Miletus and whether the character of law, drawing the analogy from the arts and sciences was relevant in discussing whether law should be changed or not, he said that the analogy drawn from the arts was false.

LS: Why?

Student: Because the law is based only on habit, whereas the arts can be improved within themselves.

LS: The arts are transmitted by instruction proper, the arts and sciences. Laws are not. Now I overstate it now to make it clear. The arts and sciences are essentially rational. The laws are not, but the laws are the medium of all political life, however derivative they may be. Therefore the political as political is, to put it mildly, of qualified rationality. That is one of the key themes of Aristotle. A key theme is not necessarily a theme which is discussed on every page; a key theme is a theme which comes up at the crucial moments. There was another key theme which we discussed last time and the time before, and that is the distinction between the *polis* and the regime; and I will now try to show how these two key themes are related to one another.

You remember what I said last time about the bifurcation: love of something, say, love of the country, love of the children—love of one's own is the general name. We love what is our own, but we also love what is good. The unity of the two is very simple. We want that our own be good, but unfortunately our own is not always good, and there a difficulty arises: What should we prefer more? One's own and the good. In politics, it is very clear. Think of a decent German under the Nazis. He loves Germany and he hates the regime: which should be authoritative for

him, the country or the abhorrence of the regime? Great question. That's the complicated case of patriotism and loyalty of which I spoke before. One way in which Aristotle articulates that problem is the distinction between the good man and the good citizen. The good man: that means the man possessing qualities which must be always the same everywhere, but the good citizen is relative to the regime; and good man and good citizen can coincide only in a decent regime because in an indecent regime, the good citizen is he who is loyal to the indecent regime in its indecency. He can therefore be not a good man. One couldn't state it more simply and clearly.

Now if we are a bit strict and not easily satisfied, we must admit with Aristotle that the coincidence of the good man and the good citizen[8] is rare. What do you have in such a situation, when there is a cleavage between the good citizen and the good man? Let us say, for simplicity's sake, the good regime is the rational regime. If you have a bad regime, you have an irrational regime. That's one point, but there is another point. Even in a good regime, as Aristotle makes clear, not all men who are even good citizens are there necessarily good men. They may be loyal to the regime because it suits them fine without truly understanding its principles, so nonrationality plays a very great role even in a good regime, all the more in bad regimes; whereas the arts and sciences are always rational. I mean, well, if someone is a bungler, then he is—he doesn't possess the art of the shoemaker. That's clear. But to the extent to which he possesses the art of the shoemaker, he is rational in his activity. The arts and sciences are rational. The *polis* can never be perfectly rational, not even in the best case, and therefore the two issues are really akin. Or one can also state it differently. So that some one or a group of men rules it is never sufficient that he be more virtuous or more rational than the others. He also must have power. Well, there is no necessary connection between virtue and power; therefore, in every political arrangement there is not only in the best case rule of reason over unreason. You cannot speak of the unreasonable character of the leather which the shoemaker uses; that is nonrational. But the ruler has to do with irrational ruled people. It is also necessary to dilute reason, and that is necessary in every regime, even in the best regime. Therefore the law regulating laws, or any other political arrangement, differs radically from the law ruling sciences and arts.

But Aristotle reminds us of this problem of science, rationality in the highest form. We cannot—we must not forget that. That may be politically very unimportant in most cases, but it is very important to *know* that, lest we understand politics and the *polis* in terms of a rational society, a rational association properly understood, and then we have false expectations from politics, and we will make all kinds of theoretical and practical errors. And therefore it is very important: in the case of flute-playing or shoemaking or mathematicians or anything else, everyone would regard it as wholly irrelevant whether that man is free born or a slave, whether he is rich or whether he is poor. But politically it is very important. Even mere physical strength is of course of the utmost importance politically, and it comes out simply in the form of the claim of mere numbers. That must be considered. Aristotle reopens the whole political issue after having drawn our attention to the radical disproportion between the intellectual pursuits proper and politics, so that we understand the political things better. Now we cannot possibly read everything; a little bit further on where he speaks[viii]—paragraph 7.

[viii] There is some inaudible talk about the place in the text.

Mr. Reinken:
This is impossible. It is therefore clear that in matters political there is no good reason for basing a claim to the exercise of authority on any and every kind of superiority. Some may be swift and others slow; but this is no reason why the one should have more, and the other less. It is in athletic contests that the superiority of the swift receives its reward. Claims to political rights must be based on the ground of contribution to the elements which constitute the being of the state. There is thus good ground for the claims to honour and office which are made by persons of good descent, free birth, or wealth. (1283a10-18)

LS: You see, silence about the wise or the wise men. Starting from the political as such, these are the three groups of men whose claims come up first. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Those who hold office must necessarily be free men and taxpayers: a state could not be composed entirely of men without means, any more than it could be composed entirely of slaves. But we must add that if wealth and free birth are necessary elements, the temper of justice and a martial habit are also necessary. These, too, are elements which must be present if men are to live together in a state. The one difference is that the first two elements are necessary to the simple existence of a state, and the last two for its good life. (1283a18-23)

LS: Now you see here how "quote realistic unquote" Aristotle is. You can have a society in which virtuous men properly understood and wise men are not there. But you cannot have a society without free men and men of some property. and so on. Now then Aristotle in the sequel takes up the discussion and states the case for each of the three.[9] We do not have to repeat that, because we had parallels of this before. Let us turn toward the end of 1283a, where there begins a new point. If all were in one city: I mean the good and the rich and the men of noble birth. Yes, the beginning of 1283b.

Mr. Reinken:
Let us suppose these rival claimants—for example, the good, the wealthy and well-born, and some sort of general body of citizens—all living together in a single state. Will they fall to disputing which of them is to govern, or will they agree? This issue is not a matter of dispute in any of the constitutions mentioned in our previous classification. These constitutions differ in virtue of different groups being sovereign: one of them is distinguished by sovereignty being vested in the wealthy; another by its being vested in the good; and so with each of the rest. But the question we are discussing is different. It is a question of determining who is to govern when the claims of different groups are simultaneously present. Suppose, for example, that the good are exceedingly few in number— (1283b1-11)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Now what does Aristotle mean? In every actual society, the question is settled [as to] who governs, what is the ruling group or the combination of ruling groups; so therefore in any given society that is no question. But we, people like Aristotle, must open it. Why? Well, that is a theoretical question. The theoretical question, we

can say, is that which is not necessarily raised by the actual politician and legislator but which is necessarily raised by the teacher of legislators, because the teacher of legislators is not limited to the conditions existing here or there but[10] he must be open to all possible conditions. The situation which Aristotle describes exists, of course, potentially everywhere, but it becomes actual only in situations approaching civil war. There you have an established regime which is called into question, and therefore the question which Aristotle raises is fundamentally the hottest iron everywhere, because it is everywhere a regime is settled, a constitution is established. But the theoretical question never can take the constitution for granted and must go back behind it. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Suppose, for example, that the good are exceedingly few in number: how are we to settle their claim? Must we only have regard to the fact that they are few for the function they have to discharge; and must we therefore inquire whether they will be able to manage a state, or numerous enough to compose one? (1283b10-13)

LS: You see here already the thing which you know anyway: rule of the virtuous, at first glance the only reasonable proposition, is a problem. It is not a problem in the arts or sciences, because there it is clear that those good at the job are to be preferred regardless of any other consideration, but not in the *polis*. Now why is this so? We can perhaps put here the main reasons together.[11] Starting from the ordinary facts of life, why is the claim based on virtue, or knowledge rather, not the only politically relevant claim, whereas the claim to be a physician or a shoemaker always presupposes something—

Student: . . . power considerations . . . The good have the power of knowledge; the many have the power of numbers.

LS: Yes, but that is linked up with something else, and one should perhaps put it on the proper basis. For the arts and sciences, expertise is required. No expertise is required for being a citizen, number one; and therefore this other consideration comes in. But there is something else to which Aristotle refers later in this book. Let us take a physician. A physician is also your ruler in a way. He tells you to do this or to do that, but of course you are free to comply with his advice or not. You are free to do it perhaps at the peril of your life, but that's your business. Still, in the moment you have the feeling that the physician does this because he gets money from a drug firm, from a drug manufacturer: out. So in other words, you assume that the physician's self-interest is perfectly taken care of by his getting an honorarium, a fixed honorarium for giving you the best advice; therefore you trust him. But if there were any danger of his having some ulterior motive going beyond the honorarium, you would not trust him.

Now let us apply this to the political matters. The government has a much broader sphere than any expert has. Health and life are important things but still, that is not the whole of our interest. The government somehow has our whole fate in its hands, the sovereign. And secondly, and that is an equally important consideration, there is no question of a limited self-interest as in the case of the physician. You must not think in terms of government officials including the president of the United States. You must really think of the ruling body, whoever they may be. They are necessarily self-interested in a way going much beyond the self-interest of the honest physician.

That is the reason why one cannot leave it at the consideration of the rule of the virtuous; and secondly, the point which you brought up rightly: the importance of mere force. No expert as expert can apply force, and the government by definition can apply force. Now let us turn a little bit at the end in 1283b, towards the end.[ix]

Mr. Reinken:
—collectively if not individually—from being better, or richer, than the Few. This last reflection enables us to take another step, and to meet a difficulty which is sometimes raised and discussed. The difficulty is this. Suppose that the Many are actually better, taken as a whole, than the Few: what, in that case, is the proper policy for a lawgiver who wishes to enact right laws to the best of his power? Should he direct his legislation to the benefit of the better sort, or should he direct it to that of the majority? We may reply that what is 'right' should be understood as what is 'equally right'; and what is 'equally right' is what is for the benefit of the whole state and for the common good of its citizens. Citizens, in the common sense of that term, are *all* who share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn. In the particular sense of the term, they vary from constitution to constitution; and under an ideal constitution they must be those who are able and willing to rule and be ruled with a view to attaining a way of life according to goodness. (1283b34-84a3)

LS: Now let us stop here. Well, he doesn't say, of course, "ideal," but "the best regime." But that I have said before. Now the correct (the right, as he says—"the correct" would be a better translation) is the equal. That is, the politically correct is the equal, meaning that which refers to the advantage of all citizens. That's trivial, but because of its triviality is not enlightening, because who is a citizen? The citizen is relative to the regime and therefore we are where we were again. And in the best regime only the good man would be a citizen. We are back where we were. What is the meaning of this back and forth movement? Now Aristotle—yes? Before we go on, that was the difficulty which bothered you last time in your paper Mr. Hurst. How would you account for that? Let us not forget where we were. We had a discussion of all these things before, culminating in a qualified democracy. Then an entirely new beginning where science came in and the strange fact that the qualifications of the men of science and of the artisans are wholly immune to any politically relevant consideration like free born or slave, rich or poor and so on and so on. And now we come back to the old aristocratic argument. What is it all about? Well, Aristotle is leading up to a new suggestion and he reminds us again and again of one basic consideration: the evidence of the aristocratic argument that the best men should rule, and the weakness of that argument. We have to keep this constantly in mind if we want to understand that. Now if we follow the evidence of the aristocratic argument, what happens? The immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
If there is one person[x] so pre-eminently superior in goodness that there can be no comparison between the goodness and political capacity which he shows[xi] and what is

[ix] The tape was changed at this point; the recording resumes during the reading of 1283b, section 10.
[x] In Barker: "(or several persons, but yet not enough to form the full measure of a state)"
[xi] In Barker: "(or several show, when there is more than one)"

shown by the rest, such a person, or such persons, can no longer be treated as part of a state. Being so greatly superior to others in goodness and political capacity, they will suffer injustice if they are treated as worthy only of an equal share; for a person of this order may very well be like a god among men. This being the case, it is clear that law generally is necessarily limited to those who are equal in birth and capacity. (1284a4-13)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. Now if virtue as such is a title to rule, then if one virtuous man or a few virtuous men are endowed with political power (otherwise they are of no help) and are in both respects superior to all others, they are no longer parts of the *polis*, which means they can no longer be regarded as subject to the whole. The implication: the *polis* seems to stand or fall by a certain equality or mediocrity. Yes, that's a fact. But it also tends toward excellence and that is a great problem, how to reconcile the two things. I don't know whether you have read Mr. Jaffa's book, Harry V. Jaffa's book, *The Crisis of the House Divided*.[xii] There he presents this issue in the terms in which Lincoln stated them: the genius in a democracy. We need non-mediocre men. That comes up all the time, and yet there is a certain difficulty in that. They are so big[12] that they don't find place within the roof. Now Aristotle developed this point with perfect frankness and says from this an atrocious measure becomes intelligible, a measure familiar to Athens, especially: the ostracism. You know what the ostracism was: the banishment of a citizen, not based necessarily on a crime; it could be based on the fact that he was disturbing, by his excellence, civic equality. The mechanism can very well be this: that he becomes so popular that this popularity becomes a greater political power than the democratic mechanisms. That can happen. Therefore Aristotle says, while he deplores that in a way, but it is consistent of the Athenian democracy to use this seemingly so unjust measure that it expels its best men because by their very goodness they endanger the regime. Now let us turn to 1284b7; the problem is universal and applies to all regimes.

Mr. Reinken:
The difficulty which we are discussing is one which is common to all forms of government, the right as well as the wrong; and if wrong or perverted forms adopt this policy of levelling with a view to their own particular interest, something the same is also true of forms which look to the common good. This rule of proportion may also be observed in the arts and sciences generally. (1284b4-8)

LS: Yes: in the other arts and sciences. You see he comes back to that theme constantly in this book. That is, we must enlarge our view and consider not merely the political things but also the nonpolitical or transpolitical things in order to understand better the political things. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
A painter would not permit a foot which exceeded the bounds of symmetry, however beautiful it might be, to appear in a figure on his canvas. A shipwright would not tolerate a stern, or any other part of a ship, which was out of proportion. A choirmaster would not admit to a choir a singer with a greater compass and a finer voice than any of the other members. In view of this general rule, a policy of levelling need not prevent a monarch

[xii] Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (1959).

who practises it from being in harmony with his state—provided that his government is otherwise beneficial; and thus the argument in favour of ostracism possesses a kind of political justice in relation to any of the recognized forms of pre-eminence. (1284b8-18)

LS: Now let us stop here. So there is something rational in this seeming irrationality of insisting on a mediocrity which doesn't work. But the better solution, Aristotle says in the immediate sequel, would of course be to give the government to such an outstanding man and to make him the sole ruler in the city. If he surpasses all his fellow citizens as a god surpasses men, he should be treated as a god. This is the transition to the discussion of kingship in the sequel. So kingship comes in here then via the question of the men of supreme excellence, and the question of supreme excellence comes in, in the context of the consideration of the arts and sciences. I take this to mean [that] this is Aristotle's way of discussing the problem of the philosopher-king. There is no philosopher-king in Aristotle, but there is a kind of political reflection of the philosopher-king: the man of supreme political intelligence and supreme political virtue. Is this not a case which must be taken into consideration? Aristotle's silence about the philosophers is very important. That philosophy is transpolitical is absolutely essential from Aristotle's point of view, and that is perhaps the most important information, negative information, the *Politics* contains: that philosophy is transpolitical. Philosophy is transpolitical, fundamentally for the Platonic reasons. But first Mr. Hurst had a point.

Mr. Hurst: . . . his argument running along the theme of where . . . the *polis* to assert itself in the very terms . . .

LS: Yes, that he says here. Well, the qualifications to that will come later in the discussion of kingship. I mean, Aristotle is not (how shall I say?) a schoolmaster who, where every sentence is susceptible of being quoted out of the context. That's a movement of thought where you cannot arbitrarily stop. You have to follow the whole thing and he is not afraid of arriving at very paradoxical conclusions within the process of thought. Now here then there begins[13] the discussion of kingship and that is the only discussion of kingship we have in the book, because later on, in book 5, he discusses the destruction and preservation of all regimes and therefore also of kingship. But in the other books, in books 4, 6, 7 and 8, they are strictly republican for the reason I have given before. There is only one point here which we should mention, near the beginning of the discussion of kingship. That is probably the next chapter. "Perhaps it is well."

Mr. Reinken:
It will perhaps be well— (1284b35)

LS: You see the undogmatic tone of Aristotle: "perhaps it will be well." We could also proceed differently and of course Aristotle doesn't toss coins. He has his reasons, but it is not hard and fast. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
after the previous discussion, to make a transition, and to proceed to consider kingship. Government by a king is, in our view, one of the right constitutions. The question we have to consider is whether this form of government is expedient for states or territories which are to be properly governed— (1284b35-41)

LS: Let us stop here. For a city or a country: this gives us the first idea regarding kingship. Do you see the point? [Pause] Do you see the point? City or country? Really, a modicum of ordinary historical knowledge is sufficient to answer that question. Well, why don't you speak up, those who—

Mr. Reinken: Kings rule over vast tracts.

LS: Ya. The city is essentially a republican community. Larger territories are ordinarily ruled by kings. We have forgotten that, but it's a very short time ago that it was still a very hot issue. Do you remember it from American discussions? Pardon?

Student: That was the whole point about America, wasn't it, whether such a large country could be republican?

LS: *The Federalist Papers* still[14]discuss the question: Can a large territory be a republic? The first time that you had a republic which was not a so-called city-state was this country, because you can't count the few years of the French Revolution where France was a republic, you know, because that failed. The American *experiment*, which remained an experiment at least until Lincoln's time, as Lincoln knew very well. America gave the first proof that there can be a large state which is republican. But if it is true that the *polis* is the highest form of political or social organization as Aristotle maintains, this implies already a certain question mark regarding kingship. You will find another argument later. What's your difficulty?

Student: If the *polis*—in which sense is the *polis* . . .

LS: A fundamentally urban society, which of course—

Student: You're using it as a kind of city—

LS: Yes, sure it's a city.

Student: Only not a state at all, but simply a city.

LS: That's very important. Otherwise this is a village society. You can have such a tribe living in villages and forming a political unity. That existed in western Greece. Aristotle gives some examples. That's not a *polis* properly speaking. People must live an urban life, which doesn't mean that all citizens must be city-dwellers. They must have their land—you know the peasants or farmers, however you call them, and they are citizens—but the center and the part which sets the tone to the whole association is the city. That is clear. That is essential for Aristotle. Ya, but is there any other point regarding this? Yes?

Student: Is Aristotle saying here . . . or is he implying, that a city should be republican and a country should be a kingship, or is he saying this is . . .

LS: That he does not develop, but I think he would say there is a natural tendency of the larger territory to be monarchically ruled and of the smaller society, which is surveyable (that's a word which he used) which is well surveyable—in other words, where the details would be roughly this. You can have freedom only if there is a high degree of mutual trust, and trust, in order to be well founded, must be based on acquaintance, and acquaintance requires living together. You do not have to know, as I stated on a former occasion, every other fellow citizen but it is enough that you live together with people who live together with these other people and so there is this community. And you can easily recognize the problems of our very large societies, and especially our very large metropolitan areas in these reflections. You know? We see now the difficulty. We try to get this degree of familiarity by TV, for example, where you see the presidential candidate, whom you are not likely to have seen in earlier times. The question is: Is TV acquaintance true acquaintance?

Student: About what you just said: maybe modern large-scale democracy has solved the problem of genius in a way that small democracy couldn't. It seems to me that precisely because you're acquainted with the man of overbearing virtue that you can't tolerate his presence and you ostracise him; it seems in our society that there may be a tendency to elect him to kingship, which is essentially in a way what our presidency is, and thus give him a place which is possible only because as you just pointed out, only large societies can have kings.

LS: Yes, but I heard something about a two-term law, you know, to prevent the development of kingship. And there are some other reasons which I think would make monarchy impossible. You see that monarchies cannot so easily be established; they need also some other paraphernalia, something like a hereditary nobility, something strictly forbidden by the United States Constitution, and so on.

Same Student: Well, I was here talking I think metaphorically, that in a larger society where you don't have to communicate with these people or be overwhelmed by them, you can give them more easily roles to play than you can in a smaller—

LS: Yes, well these are reflections which are partly developed, as you know, in the *Federalist Papers*. The *Federalist Papers* are an argument on a republican basis against the older republican theory. They try to show on the republican basis that a country of the size of the thirteen colonies can be a republic, and therefore all the other considerations which came in—you know there was a very great problem. In recollection, in crude historical recollection, it looked this way: the monarchies had succeeded in pacifying very large territories and without civil war to speak of. Think of France prior to the French Revolution, and some other examples of this kind and so. That worked. But what about the republics, the city-states of antiquity? The most glorious of them, Athens: constant political unrest, change of regimes, and what have you. And even in Rome, the terrible fights between the patricians and plebeians, and all this kind of thing. And therefore one argument of Madison, as you know, is this: that precisely by the largeness you avoid certain great inconveniences coming from closeness and nearness. You neutralize the violent dissensions within a small community by having a large society in which they are cancelled out by other violent dissensions which are local, so none of them takes on a national or federal character. Yes.

Now the kinds of kingship: Aristotle distinguishes five of them, of which I enumerate. One is of no very great interest; that is hardly more than hereditary and perpetual generalship. That's the Spartans' king. Then you have among the barbarians a kingship which is despotic or tyrannical rule but according to law and hereditary, meaning there is a traditional customary law which the king cannot infringe upon. The third among the ancient Greeks, which is in effect, as Aristotle says, elective tyranny, i.e., the ruler has a perfect discretion but he is elected. So whereas the official definition of tyranny is, as we shall see, rule without laws and over unwilling subjects, here you have a tyranny which is rule without laws but over willing subjects. That runs counter to the Jane Austenian definition which Aristotle gives, where—you know what I mean by Jane Austen. And fourth, the kingship of the heroic times, where the kings were benefactors of the multitudes or leaders in war, and founders; therefore, they were men of excellence. The Spartan kingship is only a relic of that. After the kings were stripped of these many privileges, they remained only generals and something like priests. And then finally the overall kingship, *pambasileia*, with which Aristotle alone is concerned. Only this universal kingship is from Aristotle's point of view worthy of serious consideration. Now in this context, the question arises: What is best, the rule of the best men [or] rule by the best laws? Let us turn to 1286a.

Mr. Reinken:
Our inquiry will naturally start from the general problem, 'Is it more expedient to be ruled by the one best man, or by the best laws?' (1286a8-10)

LS: We cannot go into the details. Yes, always you can decide. Read the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
Those who hold that kingship is expedient argue that law can only lay down general rules; it cannot issue commands to deal with various different conjunctures; and the rule of the letter of law is therefore a folly in any and every art. In Egypt it is permissible for doctors to alter the rules of treatment after the first four days, though a doctor who alters them earlier does so at his own risk. If we follow this line it is clear that a constitution based on the letter and rules of law is not the best constitution, in the same way and for the same reason. (1286a10-16)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. You see the analogy of the arts or of the sciences would decide in favor of the rule of a man, of personal rule. You see how this whole thing goes through. The arts and sciences, that is somehow linked up with the issue of full monarchy [in] this way: the most knowing man should rule, i.e., he should not be hampered by anything. The thought is perfectly reasonable. A wise man limited by laws, that means you limit wisdom, but wisdom can only be limited by nonwisdom, so if you want to have wisdom the absolute rule of the wise man would of course be preferable. Let us turn to 1286b, almost immediately after the beginning, when he first says that many will make a revolt, might make a revolt.

Mr. Reinken:
Another objection may, however, be urged—that a body of men will be subject to faction, from which the one man will be free. It is perhaps an answer to this objection that the body may be of good character equally with the one man. If we call by the name of aristocracy a government vested in a number of persons who are all good men, and by the

name of kingship a government vested in a single person, we may say that aristocracy is better for states than kingship—provided only that a body of men who are all equally good can be actually found. Perhaps the reason why kingship was formerly common was because it was rare to find a number of men of outstanding goodness—all the more as states were then thinly populated. A further reason why kings were appointed was that they were benefactors—which it is the duty of all good men to be. Later there arose a number of persons of equal goodness; and they, refusing to tolerate the rule of a single person, desired to have something they could share in common, and so established a constitution. Later still, they deteriorated— (1286b3-14)

LS: The constitution means here one special regime which is called polity—you know, the rule of hoplites. I explained this last time: a democracy with a property qualification.

Mr. Reinken:
Later still they deteriorated in character: they enriched themselves from the public property; and it is to some such origin—the honour in which wealth now began to be held—that we may reasonably ascribe the rise of oligarchy. At a still later stage there was a change from oligarchies to tyrannies, and then from tyrannies to democracy. The reason was that the members of the government, greedy for the gains which office conferred, limited it to a narrower and narrower circle; and by this policy they strengthened the masses until they rose in rebellion and established democracies. Nowadays, when states have become still larger, we may almost say that it is hardly even possible for any other form of constitution to exist. (1286b14-23)

LS: Except democracy. Well, this historical survey is, first of all, in general agreement with what actually happened in Greece, you know? The tyrants came, in Athens for example, in between the rule of the old families and the emergence of democracy, but that is not our point here. The crucial point is first this: kingship belongs to the olden times. When this situation was not too rare, to find a single man of outstanding qualities, but with the development of civilization that became the exception. There were always a plurality of—i.e., more than one, and therefore kingship lost its basis. Today it is so that democracy is—Aristotle [says] "today," meaning in his day—democracy is almost inevitable. Aristotle knows that; you see he is open to the facts, but he does not—he refuses to ride on the wave of the future. The fact that democracy was victorious does not prove to him that democracy is best. For him, the proper medium for a city is an aristocracy. Now and he makes here quite clear that an aristocracy is also, in a way, old-fashioned. He says so. So in other words, the good political period, the period more favorable to the best political arrangements, was in the past, and what does this mean? Does Aristotle have a reactionary, retrograde, or however you call it, philosophy of history? What about the life of the mind? Because a real reactionary would say also the thought of the past was superior to the thought of the present. What does Aristotle think about the thought or the highest thought of the present and the past? Well? Yes?

Student: Well, I would think . . . claim any necessary relationship, because . . . is as you say trans-political . . .

LS: Ya, that is true. It's perfectly true, but we can state it more simply. What is the peak of philosophy according to Aristotle?

Student: Aristotle.

LS: Very good. So in other words, the present. So you have then this relation: the peak of the *polis* does not coincide with the peak of thought. There is no simple harmony between political life and intellectual life. Yes?

Student: Does he say in the *Politics* that philosophy is . . . thought? . . .

LS: No, he has no occasion. You see, here he addresses primarily gentlemen, men willing and able for political activity, including that of legislators. He does not primarily address philosophers. That's a practical book in spite of the fact that it also addresses philosophers, but not them primarily. The clearest statement as to this point, which Mr. Steintrager brought out, is the first book of the *Metaphysics* where you have a survey of all earlier thought and which is on the whole a history of progress from the primitive and crude beginnings, via such a man as Plato to Aristotle.

But to come back to the point, the peak of the *polis* is not identical with the peak of thought. That is the same problem we have discussed in other forms today and sometime before: the law governing the political and social arrangements is not the law governing the intellectual life. The alternative—in order to understand that we have to consider the alternative. The alternative is that they are strictly parallel, so that intellectual progress is as such social progress and vice versa. That is a famous doctrine of the seventeenth-eighteenth century and still of some power in our own age. That was not the older view. There were people who believed that, as our friend Hippodamus, you remember, in the second book, who had such a notion, but apparently only implicitly: that laws as well as arts are equally progressive and ought to be progressive. That was not the view of the classical philosophers. The whole notion that reason, science, enlightenment is a very important if not the most important social bond, was wholly alien to the classics. It became very powerful in the seventeenth-eighteenth century, where the notion of enlightened self-interest was developed from, beginning from such people as Hobbes and Locke and culminating, in a way, in utilitarianism, and where there was implied of course [that] there is a perfect harmony between society and enlightenment, between society and science and philosophy. And in our present society this is no longer explicitly stated, very frequently at least, but it is tacitly presupposed. The emphasis may be more today on technology than on science or philosophy, but since technology is so obviously dependent on science it amounts to the same thing.[15] I will mention only one point, and let us look at the end of book 3.[xiii]

Mr. Reinken:
These issues determined, we must next attempt to treat of the best form of constitution, asking ourselves, "Under what conditions does it tend to arise, and how can it be

[xiii] There is a brief exchange about where Mr. Reinken should begin reading.

established?" In order to make a proper inquiry into this subject it is necessary [to begin by determining the nature of the most desirable mode of life].[xiv] (1288b3-7)

LS: Yes, now this last sentence of book 3 is identical with the beginning of book 7, and thus it has led to all kinds of speculations and people have even changed the order of the books. Barker has preserved the traditional order, the manuscript order. And so people have made books 7 and 8 books 4 and 5, respectively, and so on. Now what happened was apparently this: I do not believe that it is due to[16] accident, entirely. I think Aristotle planned it that way. He had first had the discussion, well, of all regimes, in general. Then we have a discussion of kingship and a very brief discussion of aristocracy, which we have not read. Then four regimes remain: polity, democracy, oligarchy and tyranny. So Aristotle goes on in book 4 into these other regimes, up to book 6. In books 7 and 8 he gives the details of the best regime[17] which you may call an aristocracy, you may call a polity; that's a moot question. But this could also follow here. It is really possible to go on from here directly, but that Aristotle took this roundabout way about the less satisfactory regimes is of course not entirely an accident, because we learn something by looking at the inferior regimes of how to establish the best possible regime, as Aristotle saw it, and that is not a kingship but a republic, and a republic which you may call either an aristocracy or a polity. It would be better, I think, to call it an aristocracy.

Now in this last part of book 3 which we haven't read there is one thought which I think I should point out. Aristotle describes first kingship and then aristocracy, and then also a regime which—well, let us leave it at that: kingship and aristocracy. And then he raises a question: Under what conditions is a kingship possible, under what conditions is an aristocracy possible? And that leads to be broader question: Under what condition is any of the desirable regimes possible? What was your point?

Student: Well, I was going to say that the way the translation is—this last sentence we just read, he asks under what conditions does it *tend to arise*, almost as though the conditions themselves bring it about and man's action is merely to establish it.

LS: Now let me see. To which passage—did you mean the passage which we just read?

Student: [The passage] we just read, yes.

LS: Yes. "Tend" is not good. Under what condition—I will now first give a literal translation, which seems to confirm what you say. "In what way it comes into being by nature" would be a very literal translation. But what does Aristotle mean by that in the light of the context? What are the conditions under which it is naturally fit to arise? He doesn't mean that it will necessarily arise. That would be just wrong. Each of these regimes has its specific condition. A multitude of this kind is fit for kingly rule. A [multitude][18] of that kind is fit for aristocratic rule, and a multitude of that kind is fit for, let's say constitutional rule (that's the usual bad translation). So there is no regime which is universally possible. Every regime presupposes specific conditions, and therefore what is simply best is by no means everywhere and always possible. That is

[xiv] 1288b. The phrase in brackets is inserted by Barker.

absolutely crucial for Aristotle. There is not—in other words, something may be intrinsically best and absolutely impossible in the circumstances.

In order to understand that, we have to look forward to certain modern doctrines. Take, for example, Thomas Paine, who really elaborates something suggested by Rousseau at this point. What does Paine say, in effect? There is only one regime which is decent, let me say; and this of course must be somehow established sooner or later everywhere. But it would be safer[19] —to express Paine's thought as follows: there is only one regime which is legitimate.[xv] All others are illegitimate, despotic or what have you, and that one legitimate regime is therefore universally necessary. That doesn't exist in Aristotle. For Aristotle, it is essential that there is a variety of regimes fit for different places and for different types. This notion of *the* legitimate regime which is universally legitimate is a consequence of the natural law doctrines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which, one can say, transform the Thomistic natural law doctrine into a political natural law doctrine and claim the same unchangeability for the political natural law which Thomas Aquinas had claimed for the nonpolitical natural law.

And one must emphasize this point, because in the literature you frequently find rejection of earlier political philosophy on this ground: that earlier political thought tried to find solutions valid for all times and places. These people remembered only people like, to some extent, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Paine and simply had no knowledge of what political philosophy or political science meant originally. One can express Aristotle's thought as follows. There is one and only one regime which is intrinsically the best, but this is not possible always and everywhere; and since, in order to be legitimate, a regime must be possible, the best regime cannot be legitimate everywhere. The legitimate regime is something very different from the best regime. Legitimacy in this sense is necessarily variable. Natural right is changeable, and yet bestness, if I may say so, is unchangeable. Human perfection has always the same meaning regardless of whether men are or can be always aware of it. They may not be able to be aware of it because of very bad, very harsh life which they have to lead and where they cannot think much beyond the immediate necessities of life. That is true, that exists. But that does not affect the fact that the best human life, the perfection of human life is intrinsically the same always. But the same is not true of the regime—of legitimacy, because what is not possible cannot possibly be legitimate. And yet it can nevertheless remain the best in the light of which you can diagnose the defects of the society in which you live, and yet see there is no possibility of a radical change in that direction. Yes?

Student: How do you distinguish this position that you just outlined that Aristotle has from what you call the position of modern social science?

LS: Because the modern social scientists deny that there is the one naturally best. The modern social scientists deny any natural hierarchy—any. They admit conventional hierarchies which are facts everywhere. But they deny that there is an order of—but you know that. I mean, that is not limited to the social scientists in the narrower sense, but in Dewey, John Dewey, the same view: there are *n* human activities and even *n* kinds of human activities; none can claim to be intrinsically superior to the others. Haven't you heard of that view? That's the opposite of what

[xv] Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (1791).

Aristotle says. For Aristotle, there is an order of the human activities. The activities which require only, or almost only, the body and the activity of the body are by nature inferior to those which are activities of the mind; and there is even a hierarchy among them. That is clear. In other words, when you use this schematic distinction which is so unenlightening—absolutism, relativism—Aristotle is neither a relativist in this sense nor an absolutist as the relativist understands absolutism. But if one is not afraid of bad words, I would say Aristotle is of course an absolutist in that sense. He is only a qualified absolutist: qualified by common sense, we can say.

So we have then indeed used up the whole meeting for the rest of the third book, and next time we will have two papers on the fourth book.[20]

Session 9: no date
Preservation of regimes; laws; social science (book 4)

Leo Strauss: You did not express at any point a dissatisfaction with Aristotle on either theoretical or political grounds.[i]

Mr. Gray: I expressed one dissatisfaction: I think the relationships between laws and the regime, but I thought that there were other—

LS: Ya, but that was not—that's true, I make note of that point, but that I didn't regard as a criticism, and I don't encourage [LS laughs]—I don't wish to encourage dissatisfaction, but I accept that it is inevitable. Even if Aristotle is hundred percent right, there are difficulties, ya?

Mr. Gray: Yes.

LS: Which would present themselves more simply in the form of objections. Ya? He says something, doesn't give a reason. Why? It's an objection. This point which you made I took notice of, but Aristotle has disposed of this objection already. We have not discussed it in class, I believe, but some of you may remember. Do you remember a case where Aristotle spoke of something which is a legal question and not a political question, meaning by that it is a question which is neutral to the difference of regimes? Yes, Mr. Hurst?

Mr. Hurst: Yeah, when he referred to the Spartan kingship.

LS: Exactly. Can you—

Mr. Hurst: He was going to discuss monarchy by discussing the extremes. Spartan kingship, which was at this time a hereditary generalship and the absolute monarchy, and he said that we could dismiss the Spartan kingship primarily because whether or not a man is the hereditary commander of an army is a legal question and not what's fundamental to the regime. It can have a hereditary commander, in other words, in a *polis*.

LS: In a democracy, an oligarchy and so. Yes, that is the best example, indeed. Thank you. So Aristotle knew that, that there are things that are politically neutral. And it was also implied when he discussed the question of whether debts are to be paid after the revolution. Do you remember that? And a revolution has taken place, and should the post-revolutionary government have an obligation to pay the debts incurred by the (let us assume) tyrannical prerevolutionary government? Aristotle didn't answer that question but he said it is a legal question. But what he meant by it is that also there is a certain neutrality, because if the debts were incurred in the interest of the *polis* as a whole, say

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

for building hospitals, then it is only fair that the city, the post-revolutionary government pays for it, because it is a lasting improvement which was made possible by the abominable tyrant. But here he was accidentally beneficial; but if he did it in order to pay his bodyguard, his secret police or however you call it, then no, because then the foreign creditors simply were themselves crooks by helping a crook. So in other words, he was . . . politically neutral. There are certain things which are politically neutral, and Aristotle is of course not blind to it, but his point is that the important and interesting things are the politically non-neutral things. Let us say the question of the merely technical or merely economic character would as such not be politically exciting, let me say. And the great issues are always political; and even on the basis of Marxism for example, the class struggle is of course a political phenomenon and the revolution is a political phenomenon.[1] People can get excited about all kinds of things, even about famine, for example, and surely that can happen under any regime. But the question of how they will take the famine depends very much on how they conceive of the responsibility of the government.

Trotsky gives this good example.[ii] There were hunger strikes in Russia in the big cities especially in 1917, and '16 to '17 and so on, but the actual deprivations were much smaller than those which took place in '18, '19 and '20 after the Bolshevik victory. Now let us take the facts as stated by Trotsky in our question, then: Why did the famine of 1919 not lead to a revolution, whereas the famine of 1917 prepares the revolution? Because of a different attitude of the populace towards the government, towards the czarist government on the one hand and these combinations of Bolsheviks and social revolutionaries after the revolution. So the authoritative end is that where the people in principle—in principle—potentially but necessarily disagree. The political is essentially controversial. It doesn't have to be actually controversial at a given time, but it has this in itself. The derogatory meaning of political—when someone says: Adamowski is political, or Daley is political,[iii] that's politicking, but what does it mean? It's controversial. It[2] also has to do with the question of persons, the persons who are interested in becoming rulers. The derogatory meaning of politics is connected with an essentially controversial character of political things that of course is also the reason why the political is more exciting. That all men all agree all the time, that is absolutely unexciting. It would be a good thing if someone would sit down one day and take up from present American usage the variety of meanings of "politics" and "political." Simply first get a complete list and then try to understand the inner unity and how[3] both positive and the negative judgment on politics are really based on ultimately the same phenomenon, and to see whether this is in any way different from what Aristotle knew about the subject. I believe the basic fundamental phenomenon is the same in spite of the tremendous differences in all externals.

[ii] Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (Chicago IL: Haymarket Books, 2008), 611 (vol. 2, ch. 36).

[iii] Benjamin S. Adamowski was an Illinois Republican, Cook County State's Attorney and a longtime rival of the Democratic Mayor of Chicago, Richard J. Daley. Their relationship went so far as to affect the presidential election of 1960 in Illinois. See, e.g., Ovid DeMaris, *Captive City: Chicago in Chains* (NY: Lyle Stuart, 1969); Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (NY: E.P. Dutton, 1971).

There are two points, Mr. Gray, where I disapprove of your expressions. You said, when you spoke of the various things, for example, "man can be at the same time a soldier and a farmer and a juryman"—you remember?—but you said a man cannot be at the same time rich and poor; and that's incompatible. And in this connection you use the expression "logically distinct." "Logically distinct" is of course also the juryman from the soldier, even if it is the same person. The word "logic" is terribly misused in our time. Sometimes people say, "This leads to the logical conclusion" where they simply mean "to the conclusion." And what they mean to say—or do they mean to say "to the necessary conclusion, following from the premise"? But that I would believe to be clearer to say so, if necessary, than "logical." And the other expression that I didn't like was, you said "the true aristocracy," in contradistinction to the so-called aristocracy, is an ideal type. What did you mean by that?

Mr. Gray: The type that [for] which there is no existing form.

LS: Ya, but the word "ideal type" is now used as a technical term within social science, and since it never existed before, we have to comply with usage, you know? Now what is an ideal type? You must know. You are our specialist in social science. [Laughter]

Student: I think that term means [laughter]—well, "ideal type" is really taken from Carson's translation of Max Weber, I think.[iv]

LS: So it is taken from Max Weber. Ya. And?

Student: And it means, well, I suppose in a way it means a kind of taxonomic type. That is, it's a way of classifying things, whether examples of these things or not, in such a way that you're able to understand the differences in their sort of fundamental nature or fundamental character. For example, the ideal type of capitalist society or the ideal type of feudal society, it's a kind of abstraction from what you think you know about a particular social phenomenon.

LS: And this need never have existed in this form?

Student: Yes.

LS: Ya. All right, let us go back.[4] The ideal type is a construct, the construct of the scientist in order to facilitate study. Now this of course goes back to a construct which does not claim to mirror, to imitate, to reproduce what is. And this is naturally not an invention of Max Weber, but has its model in natural science. For example, in optics, the perfectly black body, a theoretical object, doesn't exist,[5] but by using it, you can analyze optical phenomena.[6] This goes back to in a way Galileo's famous first experiment and the analysis connected to that. Now if one states it radically, one can say this: this kind of ideals are things which are impossible in the nature of things. They cannot be, but they

---

[iv] *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (The Free Press, 1949).

are marvelously helpful for understanding what is. You see, from Aristotle's point of view that was the height of absurdity, that the impossible should be the best key to reality. But it works somehow, at least in the natural sciences; and that is a problem which is a great problem, with which not we, perhaps, but some George should deal. George, I mean, in accordance with saying George—

Student: "Let George do it."

LS: "Let George do it." But that is surely the one. But the ideal type is a wholly inappropriate term[7] in any premodern thing. Now but the word "ideal," as I say, doesn't exist in Plato or in Aristotle. I believe it was coined, the adjective "ideal" was coined in the seventeenth century, if I remember well, in connection with certain speculations about paintings and so, ideal beauty and so. So it was never used there [in antiquity]. But the word which Barker and the others use to translate the ideal means "according to wish or prayer"; and there is of course implied in that, it is not necessarily actual; otherwise it would not be as such the object of wish or prayer. This is true, but wish or prayer does not mean however the wish or prayer of any one in his cups, but it means a wish or prayer of a sensible man . . . It is essential to the best regime from Plato's and Aristotle's point of view that it is not necessarily actual. And that is meant by . . . but it *could be*. Plato and Aristotle go out of their way—for example, Plato in the *Republic*—to say you must show the possibility; if the possibility is not proven by the fact that your blueprint is free from contradictions, [8]that is only a negative condition. You must show from the nature of things, the nature of man, the nature of human society that it is possible. So these were the only two points I have to add to your paper. Now let us turn to a discussion of the text.

Books 1, 2, 3 dealt with the highest of matters. Books 4 to 6 are the most technical books of the work, and at the end of the *Politics*, books 7 and 8 deal again with the highest matters. But Aristotle gives the reason why it is necessary to go into the humdrum affairs of politics and not to leave it at these broad and exciting questions he has dealt with hitherto; and he does this first at the beginning where we[9]—let us read the beginning of book 4.

Mr. Reinken:
There is a rule which applies to all the practical arts and sciences— (1288b10)

LS: "Practical" is an addition. "In all the arts and the sciences." "Practical" is implied by Aristotle, but we must distinguish between—you know, we must leave it at what he says. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
when they have come to cover the whole of a subject, and are no longer engaged in investigating things bit by bit. Each of them severally has to consider the different methods appropriate to the different categories of its subject. For instance, the art of

physical training[v] has to consider first which type of training is appropriate to which type of physique; second, which is the ideal type of training—that is, the training best for a physique of the best endowment and the best equipment (for the ideal type of training must be one which is suitable for such a physique); and third, which is the type of training that can be generally applied to the majority of physiques—for that, too, is one of the problems to be solved by the art of physical training. Nor is this all. There may be men who want to have physical training but do not want to attain the standard of skill and condition which is needed for competitions; and here the trainer and the gymnastic master have still another duty—to impart the degree of capacity which is all that such men want. (1288b10-19)

LS: Let us stop here, perhaps. And then there is what he says about the physician. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
What is true of the art of physical training is obviously no less true of medicine, or of shipbuilding, tailoring, and all the other arts. (1288b19-22)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. Aristotle begins again—you remember the third book had a large number of references to all the sciences and arts. Although we had been warned in book 2 that there is a radical difference between the political things on the one hand and the arts and sciences on the other, here Aristotle returns to the arts and sciences and assumes a simple parallelism, and which must be true to some extent; otherwise he wouldn't do it. And you know Aristotle takes his model of political science from the other arts and sciences, but it is very characteristic *which* arts and sciences he takes. He does not take mathematics or anything of this kind. He takes—as Barker brings out in his translation by the word "practical" or productive, but as Aristotle doesn't say explicitly, he wants us to find that out—the practical arts or sciences.

Now at the beginning he speaks of those which are comprehensive, which are complete and deal with a whole genus and not merely with a part. What he means is, for example, this: there could be a man who makes only women's shoes, or perhaps he makes only shoes for limping men. It is possible. And that is not a complete art because the true shoemaker, the perfect shoemaker, who knows the art of shoemaking, would deal with all kinds of shoes. What Aristotle implies is [that] it is possible to some extent to possess an art partly and partially, but there is something artificial about it. It's incomplete. Now what then do we find in these arts? For example, he takes the example of the gymnastic trainer. You could as well take the shoemaker. Which shoe is useful for which man, for which kind of man? And which is the best shoe? But what does this mean, the best shoe? Can there be the best shoe? Aristotle explains: to him who is by nature best equipped, that is to say, he has[10] the best size of his feet which one can have and no defects of any kind, and in addition is sufficiently wealthy to pay for the best shoes, this would be the best shoe. And then, which is most suitable to most? The shoe is really a bad example because of the great diversity, I admit that, but I only want to prevent us[11] [from]

---

[v] Here Mr. Reinken pauses to ask whether he should go on, and Strauss replies "Yes, go on, I'll tell you."

limit[ing] ourselves too narrowly to the example explicitly chosen by Aristotle. And then someone may however for some whim—although he could afford the best gymnastic trainer, let me say, to have a very special training in a limited way for some reason or other, the gymnastic trainer must be able to supervise and direct him in that too.

So[12] the complete master of an art has these variety of activities. The same must be applied to the political science. Political science must have this corresponding variety, namely—what is the consequence of that for political science. But I ask you to keep this in mind: the model for political science is not a theoretical science—mathematics, physics or so—but the practical arts. [This is] crucially important because political science is a practical science, and therefore it has its model to some extent in the other practical science[s]. It cannot have its models in purely theoretical science, where these distinctions either don't apply or are even meaningless. Yes? "Hence it is obvious."

Mr. Reinken:
It follows that the study of politics [which belongs to the practical arts and sciences][vi] must be equally comprehensive. First, it has to consider which is the best constitution, and what qualities a constitution must have to come closest to the ideal when there are no external factors to hinder its doing so. Secondly, politics has to consider which sort of constitution suits which sort of civic body. The attainment of the best constitution is likely to be impossible for the general run of states; and the good law-giver and the true statesman must therefore have their eyes open not only to what is the absolute best, but also to what is the best in relation to actual conditions. Thirdly, politics has also to consider the sort of constitution which depends upon an assumption. (1288b22-28)

LS: The Greek word for assumption is hypothesis, and that—in other words, there is something which you may or may not accept, whereas the other things you have to accept, given conditions. But here we have a special assumption. What is that?

Mr. Reinken: He says the assumption of the lower standard of civic attainment would be absolute.

LS: Let us forget—let us read Aristotle instead of Barker. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
In other words, the student of politics must also be able to study a *given*[vii] constitution, just as it stands and simply with a view to explaining how it may have arisen and how it may be made to enjoy the longest possible life. The sort of case which we have in mind is one where a state has neither the ideally best constitution nor the best constitution possible under the actual conditions, but has only a constitution of an inferior type. Fourthly, and in addition to all these functions, politics has also to provide a knowledge of the type of constitution which is best suited to states in general. (1288b28-35)

[vi] Brackets are in Barker's translation.
[vii] Italics in Barker.

LS: Now let us stop here. So, do you see?[13] To repeat, political science follows the model of all the practical arts. It is concerned with the best polity, it is concerned [with] what is best for most, i.e., for those who are not capable, who are prevented from getting the best simply. There is concern with what is best in the circumstances; and it is concerned with what people happen to desire, we can say. The just have a certain regime; they could have a better one but for some reason, perhaps for reasons of inertia, they want to preserve it, and you must also tell them how to do that. You see, this is the general plan of political science as Aristotle understands it. In the discussions, you find frequently the distinction between the idealist Plato and the realist Aristotle. These are modern words which conceal the issue as much as they reveal it, but there is an element of truth in it. But if it we were to state it more precisely, one would have to say this. Aristotle regards as the most important question: What is the best? . . . just as Plato . . . But Aristotle is somewhat more concerned than Plato with the non-best regimes and how to keep them, how to preserve them, how to improve on them. Aristotle's realism, in other words, has nothing whatever to do with value-free political science. Aristotle is perfectly willing to give people advice who have a very inferior regime as to how they can preserve it. That he sees, and he as a teacher of political science must be in a position to do so, but he does it with his eyes open. In other words, he gives these people the advice of how they can preserve an imperfect regime *as* an imperfect regime.

I once compared the difference between present-day social science—its basic idea, I mean—and Aristotle's as follows: the value-free study of political institutions would from Aristotle's point of view appear like a museum of shoes made by apprentices. All kinds of imperfect products of the political art are assembled for inspection, and just as such a museum is a wholly crazy idea, which doesn't[14]—tomorrow morning we may read in the newspaper that some millionaire established such a museum, that would not refute what I said, but in itself it is a crazy idea. That would be the Aristotelian view of a purely theoretical study of the variety of institutions without any regard to better or worse. And I hope I have made clear that Aristotle's so-called realism and his openness to all political phenomena is not only compatible with evaluation but is based on evaluation, because it presupposes—Aristotle would say if you want to give a realistic account of a given regime and[15] you cannot say what and in what way it is good or bad, you don't understand anything of it. Think of someone who knows everything about socialized medicine *except* in what respects it is good and in what respect it is bad: he knows nothing. So . . . the value judgments, which are enlightening, which are the only sources of light in human matters.

Now let us see. Then Aristotle makes clear that this concern with the variety of political phenomena and the variety of defective political phenomena is his specialty, in this sense: that he is the one who introduces this as a theme. He does this in the sequel. Will you go on, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:
Fourthly, and in addition to all these functions, politics has also to provide a knowledge of the type of constitution which is best suited to states in general. Most of the writers who treat of politics—good as they may be in other respects—fail when they come to

deal with matters of practical *utility*.[viii] We have not only to study the ideally best constitution. We have also to study the type of constitution which is practicable—(1288b33-39)

LS: And why Barker adds "ideally best" to the perfectly sufficient "the best," I don't know. Because I simply don't know—I mean, no light is thrown, no light whatever is thrown on what Aristotle means by "best" if you add "ideally best." You confuse it only, yes? Barker is a very good translator otherwise, so I mean don't think I take—I think that's not meant as a criticism of Barker, but a criticism of present-day habits. [Laughter] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
we have also to study the type of constitution which is practicable—and with it, and equally, the type which is easiest to work and most suitable to states generally. As things are, writers fall into two different classes. Some confine their investigations to the extreme of perfection, which requires a large equipment. The rest, addressing themselves rather to an attainable form, still banish from view the general range of existing constitutions, and simply extol the Spartan or some other *one* constitution. The sort of constitutional system which ought to be proposed is one which men can be easily induced, and will be readily able to graft onto the system they already have. It is as difficult a matter to reform an old constitution as it is to construct a new one; as hard to unlearn a lesson as it was to learn it initially. The true statesman, therefore, must not confine himself to the matters we have just mentioned: he must also be able, as we said previously, to help *any* existing constitution.[ix] (1288b38-89a7)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So Aristotle gives his thought now a slightly different turn. The previous political thinkers were concerned much more with regimes to be established than with the operation of regimes. Aristotle does not say that the question of establishment, of founding, is unimportant; it is for him also the most important question, as we shall see later. But on the other hand, we must not neglect that other problem of how to preserve and to improve an established regime. You see, I think we can draw an interesting conclusion on that, on present-day political science. The question of foundations has so to speak disappeared, in spite of Ghana and other places where we see foundations.[x] But generally speaking, political science is concerned with the working and changes of established regimes. The question of foundations is however a very important question, as some of our slightly older teachers still knew. Do you see to whom I refer by this allusion? How was the question of foundation—when was it still discussed, and how? Do you know—well, which is the latest thinker of whom you know who discussed it very manifestly, of whom you know by your own knowledge? Yes?

[viii] Italics in Barker.
[ix] Italics in Barker.
[x] In the mid-1950s many African colonies gained independence. Ghana, which had been controlled by the British since 1847, was the first to become independent, in 1957. In April 1960, Ghana held a constitutional referendum to determine whether its form of government would be a constitutional monarchy or a republic. They decided to become a republic and elected their first president, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1960.

Student: Harold Laski.[xi]

LS: You think so? Where?

Student: Of course. When in his discussion of pluralism . . .

LS: Ya, but is this not rather how to develop the existing democracy into something better? No, I didn't think of Laski.

Student: Leonard White.[xii]

LS: Did you do that? You mean in this country?

Student: . . . [Laughter]

LS: No, I am sorry. You are very right to laugh, because my expression was much too elliptical to be sensitive. But I didn't hear what you said.

Student: . . . it was not as . . . federalist . . .

LS: Yes, that is an interesting thing, because in this country, which is a political being of very recent origin, the foundation is remembered. Founding fathers. They do not speak of the founding fathers of England, or France, or Germany, or Italy, that is true. America was—this is an amazing thing. The foundation of a political society, and of a very large and powerful political society, is very near in time to us in this country, but not elsewhere. Still, now let us go one step further. The *Federalist Papers* were concerned with foundations in a very practical way, but I was thinking of such people like Locke, for example. All these men who talked about the state of nature, and the social contract, the transition into civil society: that was a question of foundation. They did not discuss it in terms of the foundation, namely, for example, of the qualities of the founder; they were more concerned with the question [of] how to distinguish between a just foundation by contract and an unjust foundation, say, by force. But still, the question of the foundation was there very much alive. The general tendency in the nineteenth and twentieth century has been to replace the question of foundation and of the origins by the thought of the continuous tradition. You know? And even in the analysis of affairs in this country, you may note that there are people who say that the American Revolution was not a revolution (I suppose you have heard that), which in former ages would have been regarded as manifest nonsense, because certain British institutions and important British institutions were preserved in the change but it was surely a break with the past. You

---

[xi] Harold Laski (1893-1950), professor of politics at London School of Economics and active Labour Party member who wrote widely on British and American politics.

[xii] What the student says is not clear, but it sounds like Leonard White. White was a Pulitzer Prize-winning American historian who studied administration in the context of U.S. presidential terms.

cannot abolish a hereditary nobility without effecting a revolution, to say nothing of the king. [Laughter]

But to come back to Aristotle's point, the question of preservation and improvement of existing regimes is also very important. That is the new point of Aristotle, you can say. That the foundation as the establishment is important, everyone saw; and that was reflected in popular notions: the founder[16] was a heroic being, a mythical being; and no statesman, however great, not even Pericles could become the object of such dedication and devotion as Theseus, the founder of Athens. And so on. But on the other hand, is it simply true that people have completely neglected the question of the improvement of established regimes prior to Aristotle? I mean, I am not speaking now of practitioners, who were of course always concerned also with that, but theoreticians. Do you know of any discussion of improvement as distinguished from foundation?

Mr. Reinken: Xenophon's *On Tyranny*?

LS: Ya, and also his *Ways and Means*.[17] *Ways and Means* deals with an improvement of Athenian democracy, [an] explicit theoretical discussion. Sure. But still, Xenophon did it in application to particular cases; he did not do it in the universality in which Aristotle does this.

Now let us go on where we left off, because that is a key passage regarding—on the other hand[18] we have had this already. In the sequel, Aristotle goes—[xiii]

Mr. Reinken:
He cannot do so unless he knows how many different kinds of constitutions there are.

LS: Yes. Is this not evident, that if you want to have a comprehensive knowledge of both founding, and improving and preserving of regimes, you must know all the kinds of regimes. Otherwise your knowledge would not be universal. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
As things are, we find people believing that there is only one sort of democracy or oligarchy. This is an error. To avoid that error, we must keep in mind the different varieties of each constitution; we must be aware of their number, and of the number of different ways in which they are constituted. Making the same effort of discrimination, the student of politics should also learn to distinguish the laws which are absolutely best from those which are appropriate to each constitution. (1289a9-13)

LS: Now Aristotle enlarges now or specifies now what he had said before. These three pages are *the* statements from Aristotle on what political science is about. We have seen that: the best regime; which regime suits whom; and what to do in order to preserve a given regime even if it is not the best for the people concerned. And now Aristotle adds another point, which is by no means irrelevant. Yes?

[xiii] There is a break in the tape at this point.

Mr. Reinken:
We use the phrase, 'appropriate to each constitution'—

LS: Ya, no, I am sorry,[19] we have read that. The other point being laws. The student of political science cannot limit himself to the study of regimes; he must also study the laws—laws in the widest sense, constitutions are included, that is not distinguished here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Laws, as distinct from the frame of the constitution, are the rules by which the magistrates should exercise their powers, and should watch and check transgressors. It follows on this conception of the relation between laws and constitutions that we must always bear in mind the varieties of each constitution, and the number of these varieties also in order to be able to enact the laws appropriate to each. If we assume that there is not a single form of democracy, or a single form of oligarchy, but a number of varieties of either, the same laws cannot possibly be equally beneficial to all oligarchies or to all democracies. (1289a17-25)

LS: Ya, now you omitted something. No, no, there is one point which is especially important.

Mr. Reinken:
A constitution may be defined as— (1289a15)

LS: No, before. "One must make the laws with a view to the regimes, and in fact, all make their laws with a view to the regimes." So that is not merely an advice given by Aristotle, but that is the general fact. Nowhere do people lay down laws except with a view to the regimes—disregarding as uninteresting that there are politically neutral laws. We know that; we have disposed of that. But they make never the regimes with a view to the laws. The regime is the fundamental fact, not the law. For a regime is—yes? What does it say?

Mr. Reinken:
because laws ought to be made to suit constitutions and not constitutions made to suit laws.

LS: Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
The reason is this. A constitution may be defined as 'an organization of offices in a state, by which the method of their distribution is fixed, the sovereign authority is determined, and the nature of the end to be pursued by the association and all its members is prescribed.' (1289a15-17)

LS: Ya, you see how important—I mean, to begin with, it could seem as a simply legal understanding of constitution when he says in which way the ruling offices are to be

distributed; for example, the executive should be one man, the legislative body should consist of two parts, and the judiciary should have this and this character. But it also says, and that is the difference between Aristotle and the present-day notion of constitutions, that the regime also says who is or what is the authoritative, meaning the authoritative element. Now where do we find that in the American Constitution? The other you find throughout, what he said first, but where do you find the statement in the American Constitution, the statement [of] what is the authoritative element?

Student: What about the first sentence of the Preamble?

LS: That seems trivial, but that's decisive, namely, that is no longer necessarily to be stated in any document, but that exists anywhere. And also when Aristotle speaks of the ruling offices, how they had to be distributed, you must not forget that according to Aristotle what corresponds to the present-day right to vote, namely, the seat in the popular assembly, is of course an office—and what an office, a lifelong office. A lifelong office.

And now we come to the third: What is the end of each association? Meaning of each political association, whatever the political association. What about that? Where is that? That also occurs in preambles, doesn't it? Yes, but Aristotle has also in mind something which is not necessarily expressed in any preamble, because either people are not very eloquent or they may not be perfectly fine. You may have seen some of these European constitutions which came up after the First, Second World War where all kinds of promises were made which were practically meaningless. You know this kind of thing that was politically meaningless. So the end would appear in the actual life of the community. Or more precisely, if you understand what the authoritative element is, you have already understood the end. But how can you say you have understood the end when you know the authoritative element is the people? How can you understand the end from that? What does Aristotle say?[20] He is constantly concerned with this simple question: Why does the indication of the authoritative element, or as we say, the sovereign, tell us the most important thing about the end pursued by the society as a whole?

Student: Well, any society is formed to pursue the good, of some good. And you if know the authoritative person or group in the society, then it's their good which the society is formed to pursue.

LS: Yes, very good, but can you link it up with [the] immediate discussion here as you have heard it—

Student: Whoever—

LS: The question was: How does "the people" in the Preamble of the Constitution tell us anything about the end?

Student: Well, it is for the good of all the people, not just —

LS: That's not what Aristotle [would] say. Aristotle would say "people" is an ambiguous term. There are many sorts of peoples: the *dēmos* can be of this kind, or that kind, or that kind, and therefore we have to go into the details. We have to spell out what kind of people: what, how, in what form the people is articulated. Then we know. For example, there is a preponderance of the urban population or of the rural, or vice versa, and all this kind of thing. Once we understand that, we have understood the end. And for this reason, the so-called constitution—to use this very inadequate translation—the constitution is a way of life. A constitution[21] in the modern sense is not a way of life, it is a legal document, or perhaps it is[22] the basic arrangement regarding the government. How can this be a way of life if the government does not merely mean the present administration? That is not very characteristic. But the kinds of administrations which predominate throughout, as long as the regime lasts, and if we know that what they—they are after all elected, they are not[23]—it goes down to the people, and we must look at the people in its articulation and which part is higher in rank than the other.

Now present-day social science for [various] reasons is of course in its way aware of it. I mean, for example, the reflection on stratifications of society, the notion of opinion leaders, they all refer to the nondemocratic elements which are essential to the working of the modern democracy. And they give you the details, and out of that you can gradually reach an understanding, first, [of] how sovereignty is articulated, since it surely doesn't rest in one man or one body of men in a country like the United States; and then you can also see what their objective is. Since there is a great variety of objectives, which kind of objectives has the right of way in a pinch. In very leisurely times, when there are no real issues,[24] the outcome of a boxing match can create much more excitement than anything political proper. So the end, the fact that every authoritative part, whichever it may be, has necessarily an overall objective, an end, links up the two definitions of regime as an order of ruling offices and regime as a way of life, these both at the same time. Yes?

Student: In Aristotle's terms, would the Declaration of Independence be more of a constitution of the United States than the so-called—

LS: No, it would be—I think it would be much too general for that. The Declaration of Independence would only be (how should I say?) a possible preamble to a constitution. But you know, you must not forget that the Declaration of Independence does not even settle the issue of monarchy versus republic. Are you aware of that?

Student: I think that's right.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: I think you're right, yes.

LS: Yes. It's much too general.

Same Student: Yet it establishes ends which a government—

LS: Yes, sure. Sure, but still. But what these things mean—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, what they mean operatively depends very much [on] what kind of people are authoritative in society. I refer to this fact and I don't hesitate to repeat that: in such a society as ours, things are infinitely more complex, and Aristotle understood that. The theoretical expression of that is the distinction between state and society. People may be socially prominent, by which I mean not only Social Register but also, for example, as physicists or so. None politically prominent. And the politically prominent may be entirely different people. Aristotle, by the way, is not wholly unaware of this possibility of bifurcation, but he would say the normal case is that the socially prominent are the politically prominent, that always a distinction between public and private, as we have it in modern times, permits a radical distinction between the politically prominent and the socially prominent. I discussed this—no, I didn't do it in this class. One could show this; the theoretical argument is extremely simple, and I will state it in a few words. For Aristotle, the end of man, in the light of which all these things, even the technicalities discussed, is virtue, human excellence. And human excellence is identical or almost identical with happiness, according to Aristotle. That means it is a function of civil society to make its members, those members who are capable of it, virtuous and therewith happy.

The modern liberal state is based on the premise that happiness is not identical with virtue or, more precisely, that happiness is absolutely subjective. My happiness consists in what makes *me* happy; that may differ from individual to individual and even within the same individual from one day to another. Happiness is out of the question. Therefore[25] you cannot say that the function of civil society consists in making men virtuous or happy. But you can't leave it at simple, thoughtless acceptance of whichever regime might have been established. You must find principles. How can you do that? The answer: while happiness is absolutely subjective, the conditions of happiness are objective, meaning this: however you might understand happiness, you must live to be happy. Furthermore, you must have the possibility of circulation, i.e., liberty. You must have some say, precisely because your notion of happiness differs from mine or from any other. No one can impose it upon you. That is liberty: the right to determine, to find happiness as you want it. And of course you must have the right to pursue happiness; that is an objective condition. However you understand happiness, you want happiness as you understand it, you must have the right to pursue it—the formula of the Declaration of Independence.

So you build a society dedicated to the guarantee of life, liberty, and happiness of each. The actual happiness must be found by each himself. That's no longer a public affair. That means two things at the same time. Since what we crave is not the pursuit of happiness but the enjoyment, the possession of happiness, the true fulfillment is beyond politics. Now these individuals pursuing, either in isolation or in associations, their happiness as they understand is called Society with a capital S, in contradistinction to the state. The state guarantees only the conditions of it. So from this point of view, society is higher than the state because enjoyment of happiness is higher than the pursuit of happiness. But on the other hand, happiness is hopelessly subjective, and the conditions of happiness—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are objective. They are

universally valid, however you understand happiness. The state or the government does attain higher dignity because somehow what is universally valid is more respected than what is considered a mere idiosyncrasy of an individual or of many individuals.[26] And Aristotle doesn't know that situation at all. That's the difference.

Now from this distinction between state and society it necessarily follows that the social hierarchy does not have to be the political hierarchy. An external sign is that the job of the politician or statesman may be despised . . . this distinction. And people may take their bearings much more by Ann Summer[xiv] than by Mamie Eisenhower,[xv] or take any other example you like. In other words, the White House is not necessarily what the court was (still is, in a way) in England, you know? There two stratifications converge: the seat, the authoritative even regarding manners, *the* authority regarding manners and *the* authority regarding political actions coincide. That was the older. Today they have become in a modern democracy completely separated. And one must point that out, because that is one of the blocks between us and Aristotle which make it difficult for us to understand it. But on the other hand, Aristotle brings out the importance of the political element with such a power that it is practically indispensible for us to study Aristotle [so] that we do not fall into that pitfall which is so common, that we say of the political organization that [it] is just one of the end parts of the people in which society expresses itself. You know? It is much more than that. And Aristotle is very helpful, I think, in bringing that out. Some other reasons too, but this is one which is fairly visible.[xvi] Yes?

Student: Before—just to make a point about Aristotle's classifications of the various types of regimes. He wants more precision in the way we're going to study the subject. It seems to me that in doing this, he is really going beyond common sense, is he not? He is going beyond people sort of standing around the courthouse, what they talk about. This seems to me, doing something which is very much akin to modern social science, that is he is creating a technical language.

LS: But he doesn't do that. I mean, you must say when he says first, there is nothing technical about first, second, third, and fourth.

Student: Well, there is something, in that it goes beyond common sense, it is a more precise way. It really is a matter of degree. Is it not?

LS: No, I would say that Aristotelian exactness and the prevalent notion of exactness are different in kind. Therefore I make this remark, that Aristotle understands by exactness the greatest attention to the important details. And exactness has in itself nothing to do with universally valid laws, nor with numerical ones that may come in, [and] may be important in a given situation, but it is not necessary. *Akribeia*, exactness, means to look closely at the thing as it is, in its fullness. You see, one could say that modern social science generally—I mean, there are always exceptions, but the general tendency is a

---

[xiv] It sounds like Strauss says "Ann Summer" here, which could mean the movie actress Ann Summers (1919-1974).

[xv] Mamie Eisenhower was First Lady of the United States from 1953 to 1961.

[xvi] The tape was changed at this point.

kind of formalism which is incompatible with genuine exactness as Aristotle means, namely, attentiveness to the specific. But[27] I will answer your question as well as I can, as completely as I can. Aristotle's procedure is of course of some complexity, but it is not a complexity which is not susceptible of being unraveled. He wants an overall survey of regimes—because we have to know that, otherwise we don't know whether we do not arbitrarily limit ourselves to a part of what is politically important—and therefore he needs the principle guaranteeing exhaustiveness. And that is numeric or quasi-numeric: one, a few, many; and good and bad, you remember, so you get the six regimes. And Aristotle makes it clear immediately that the merely numerical distinction, the few and the many, is accidental. It is a necessary accident, if you will, but it doesn't give you the substance of the . . . When you hear "the few" and are a babe in the woods, I mean [if] you have never looked at political things, God knows what you could think of the few. Perhaps there are few very low officials, maybe ten in the whole country, they are also few, and fewness as fewness doesn't mean anything. The few are the rich, the many are the poor; then some substance comes in. Ya? You remember.

Then he goes even beyond that, and what he does in book 4 is to some extent what I said on a former occasion: he starts from what everyone admits who has any inkling of politics in a city, but I think not only in a city, and that is that there are two groups to which you cannot possibly belong at the same time—and they have a certain antagonism, which may be latent for a long time but which is nevertheless an antagonism—and they are the rich and the poor. I think you see traces of it even today, if you look around. So that we can take the rich and the poor [LS writes on the blackboard], and if the rich rule, there's oligarchy; and if the poor rule, it's democracy. Simple. And then he tries to show that both are unsatisfactory for certain reasons, and therefore he tries to find a mean, and that is what we call the polity (I mentioned that) and a higher mean, aristocracy. We come to that later. Good.

But let us return to the surface, in Athens, ya? The struggle between the demagogues who want to milk the rich, and the rich who say that is simple robbery: whether that robbery is done by a decision in the assembly or by highway men makes no difference.
Only . . . You know in this country sometimes you hear of that even today, so that's really massive. How does Aristotle—I mean, these are his concepts, political concepts. How do we arrive at, reach a higher level? Aristotle reaches the higher level by listening a bit more, a bit longer to what common sense says. Now what does he hear? People do not really[28] [say]: We want to milk the rich. That's . . . [29] Someone in his cups might say [that], but that is not how people talk. They use much nicer phrases: We deserve it, we are the fighting force of the country. And the rich would of course say: But we pay the taxes. Or they . . . in ancient times.

But then there is something else, where the difference between the oligarchs and democrats become relatively unimportant. There is a war; and the war must be won because it may very well be a war where the loss means enslavement of the whole city. There are such situations. So they all have to stand together or hang together. Then the general, of course a general who can win, a competent general, a courageous man, resourceful, and [30]similar qualities, praiseworthy qualities are needed also in other fields,

for example, judges. Everyone can be accused of a murder, rich or poor, and he would like to be . . . if he is innocent, he would like to have an honest and impartial judge. And there is a general interest; no sophistication to speak of is required in order to see that it is generally preferable to have honest and impartial judges rather than corrupt and partial judges, and other sets of qualities, and so on and so on. So you get a certain notion which can be summarized old-fashionedly but still intelligently as follows: the *polis* needs virtue, and especially the men who have ruling offices should be virtuous men.

Now that I think is something which is said . . . you say decent man, you say responsible man, I don't care, but you mean that same thing. Everyone admits that. At least no one can publicly say the opposite without ruining himself politically; that's enough, because that's a clear indication that the denial is incompatible with political life. Then, however, we see occasionally this: we have, say, a presidential candidate or a senatorial candidate (it doesn't make a difference) who is very good, and he will choose the right, he will have the wise policy, generally speaking. You can trust him, he will be wise. And then there are some people [of whom you would say]: I wouldn't trust him, not because he would make an unwise policy but because his only reason is that this policy pays politically for *him*. Do you see my point? That somewhat subtle distinction, whether someone is merely a shrewd calculator who sees that a certain external decency is indispensable, and someone who you will really trust, and say he [that] wouldn't be a crook even if criminals would pay. That may not be quite as popular as the first one, but you cannot say that it is a very far-fetched thing. Quite a few people understand that the men who . . .

So once you become aware of that distinction between the practically sufficient appearance of honesty and genuine honesty, if you try to articulate that you will come to this view: there is a virtue which is mercenary, because it pays; and then there is also such a thing as genuine virtue. That's not a philosophical distinction. I mean, when you say in ordinary parlance, it's always intelligible: "He says he will do the right thing because it is right"—I mean, that may be a very insufficient expression on analysis, but it is something intelligible. He[31] regards right as more important than any other consideration. People understand that.

Now Aristotle says: Yes, but this distinction between genuine and mercenary virtue is the decisive distinction: if virtue is so important, we must look at virtue with particular care, and then we must attach accordingly the greatest importance to genuine virtue. From this it follows necessarily without any logical slip that the only politically good regime would be one in which the genuinely virtuous men rule. I think the argument of Plato and Aristotle regarding this point is unbeatable as long as we talk politically, to say nothing of other considerations. But then other considerations come in, namely, very powerful considerations which we have alluded to last time: the importance of number, the importance of wealth, and the incredible fact that the greatest political wisdom, the greatest statesmanship, can go together with a very low grade of private morality. It's distressing that sometimes the most virtuous and respectable men are not the politically wisest men in society and vice versa.

I don't know whether you know the book by Duff Cooper on Talleyrand.[xvii] That is very instructive from this point of view. Talleyrand led a very dissolute life; I mean women, and also money . . . But[32] the facts as presented by Duff Cooper—who is not a complete novice in political matters, as you know—show that Talleyrand was the most far-sighted statesman which France possessed from the French Revolution beginning, until say, 1840 roughly. And he . . . with his policy, did his best to get it through, his advice was usually disregarded; the disregard was always punished politically. So he really was vindicated . . . that happens; it's a complication, but what do you do in such a case? That is one of the difficulties, and there are many others. And therefore the aristocracy, which at the first go is the most sensible suggestion, proves to be not so sensible because it doesn't make sufficient allowance for the complicated character of human affairs.

But you see there is not a single point in this whole argument which is not immediately intelligible to anyone, say, older than twenty years, who has taken any interest at any time in political matters, not science, ordinary political . . . That is what Aristotle does.[33] For example, you say democracy: Switzerland is a democracy, United States is a democracy. They have different constitutions, and you can compare that and so. But you can also travel in the United States and travel in Switzerland and just look at things, how things are done. There is a rather different spirit: Switzerland is perhaps the most Victorian country (you know what the word "Victorian" means) in existence, and the United States is no longer a Victorian country. Both are democracies, but they are somehow different democracies, and since the difference does not concern merely a pure technicality—how they choose their dogcatchers here or there—but something of importance for the whole spirit of the society, it is an essential difference; and therefore let us try to establish by observation, perhaps even by counting, if that can be useful in a certain field, what the difference is. That's what Aristotle does. And Aristotle would say if the electorate is ninety percent rural, and if the electorate on the other hand is[34] forty percent rural, [that] gives the democracy a different shape. I believe the students of American history, to which I do not belong, could give you empirical evidence from this country that this is true. This is true.

And you are perfectly right, Aristotle as well as any other man theoretically dealing with politics must transcend the horizon of the citizen and even of the first-rate statesman. That is true. But the question is how he transcends it. I have been reading in former years Churchill, for example, of whom I happen to be a great admirer, and Churchill is an eminently reflective man, a thoughtful man. And political scientists can learn from him for his concrete work immensely in many senses—in all fields, really. But when he comes to questions of principle, the highest questions, he states them with a great force, as he always does these things, but so that I believe every one of us when reading that would immediately see that is in a very general way very plausible, but we would see so many objections [that] this cannot be the principle, ultimately. Churchill didn't take that step. He couldn't take that step as a statesman, I would say, because then things would

---

[xvii] Duff Cooper, *Talleyrand* (1932). Cooper (1890-1954), 1st Viscount Norwich, was a British Conservative politician. He became Secretary of State for War in 1935 and resigned in 1938 because of his disapproval of the Munich Agreement. He later served briefly in Churchill's cabinet and at diplomatic posts in Singapore and France.

become so complex and he would have to do something which he had at a certain time in his life refused to do.

Now I will try to state what I mean. I repeat only what I said in the first meeting, but it will now be a bit clearer, I hope. Here [LS writes on the blackboard] is the citizen or statesman (I don't make a distinction), and here are things at which he looks, the political things. What Aristotle does is to look beyond that wall, but in the same direction. The same direction. He leaves this untouched. He doesn't say: Your distinction between democracy and oligarchy is folklore. He says: It is not sufficiently precise, so we have to make it more precise. And he proves it to them by appealing to things which they know from their political experience. The position of the social scientist in the modern things, and I repeat again, not every present-day political scientist is a social scientist in the modern sense, you know, because fortunately there is a kind of inertia which has also these good things: that a certain tradition is preserved although no longer a hundred percent believed in. I mean, I could mention names of a certain profession to illustrate it, but that would be most improper and therefore—. [Laughter] So the social scientist in the modern sense ends here [LS taps chalk on the blackboard], and he looks at that from the other side; therefore he cannot accept the concepts which the citizen and statesman use and which Aristotle merely refines, he has to coin new concepts in order to understand it. And all the famous terminology of social science by which some people succeed in stating the most elementary things which every child knows in a language which only initiates or inmates of those institutions use. [Laughter] The "initiates" reminded me of "inmates"; I apologize.

So that's it. In other words, the question of the terminology is not an accidental thing to which we take—I take—issue on so-called aesthetic grounds; that would be really irrelevant. The main point is that the starting point is different. They as it were try to talk about political matters as if they did not know much more about them than they do. I mean, in the most radical form, which we find not in present-day social scientists but that you have to study the philosophical tradition behind it. It really means the whole enterprise is based on a universal doubt, as Descartes at the beginning of this whole thing said. We doubt all our primary awareness of the world. Universal doubt: jump out of that hole and begin absolutely at the beginning.

Now the beginning as now understood is of course sense-data. If you are very strict, you can't speak of a human being, but you have to understand what does it mean. You have certain sense-data, and they are interpreted as a human being, or maybe as a table, maybe as a dog, and you would have to understand the legitimacy of this interpretation really truly to give an account of why you can speak of human beings. But to say it more simply, political science may be, or social science may be methodically sophisticated in an incredible way. Its basis is always common sense, and it makes an arbitrary distinction between the kind of common sense it rejects and the kind of common sense it preserves. The simple example is this: no one was ever told in any social science course—excuse this universal statement based on no empirical evidence—no one was ever told in any social science course how to tell a human being from a being which is not human. Never. And yet all social science investigations presuppose of course that everyone knows how

to do it. I mean, think of it: if you are supposed to find out what is thought about, say, the election, you would naturally ask human beings, not stones; and you know how to distinguish them. How did you learn to distinguish them? Not in any classroom. In a very mysterious way, admittedly mysterious way, but if that mysterious way of distinguishing between human beings and nonhuman beings didn't exist, human life would be impossible; anything you do would be impossible and however difficult it may be to give a rational or philosophic account of that, if we do not trust it, we are absolutely lost — you do not agree with me?

Student: Well, I just thought that at some point . . . sociology . . .

LS: Well, I am sorry. And in which form, may I ask?

Same Student: In terms of society, human society being able to have certain . . .

LS: It, being?

Same Student: In terms of human society being able to have certain ends, whereas animal society does not.

LS: Ah ha, and in other words, the bees in a beehive have no end, yes?

Same Student: Not properly—well, they do perhaps in terms of preserving life, and ants and others, but not in terms of how they communicate—

LS: Yes, but is this observation truly the basis of our in fact distinguishing in everyday life between human beings and nonhuman beings? That was an attempt to make clear what the essential difference between man and non-man is. But I must also tell you that whoever the teacher was who made that [statement], the predominant view in the social sciences is that there is no essential difference between man and brutes, only difference of degrees. And I make allowance for this kind of thing; I say there is fortunately a considerable amount of old-fashioned, simple common sense. So why, then? That's clear, therefore much useful work is done in the social sciences. I am only concerned with the fundamental, methodologically-conscious approach to social matters which is now most vocal. Yes?

Student: Can I go back to the beginning to ask a question about the relationship of . . . Earlier you said that according to Aristotle it is impossible to give a realist account of existing regime without knowing what's good or bad—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: and your analogy was socialized medicine. Well, I can see clearly the effects and consequences of socialized medicine without saying whether a particular political system should adopt socialized medicine, and the same thing would apply to different regimes.

LS: Yes, but what are the effects?[35] Would you not eventually at the end of your long inquiry give a listing—at least you have in your mind: these are the advantages, these are the disadvantages of socialized medicine. If you would not be able to distinguish between the two, one could say you have collected a large[36] [amount] of material regarding socialized medicine, but strictly speaking you know nothing about it. I mean, you look at it, any social problem has this character: what speaks in favor of it, what speaks against it, what are the advantages and what are the disadvantages. To come back to what Aristotle means, it is impossible to give a realistic description of a regime without having some notion, maybe . . . of its good and its bad qualities. It's impossible. Not going into the subtle question, which I am not going to take up, that when you of course never mention every individual feature: that's infinite, innumerable, impossible. You select, and what you select is already guided by considerations of advantages and disadvantages. I am not speaking of that. But you cannot do it—for example,[37] if you give a description of a particularly ugly man, avoiding carefully every term which conveys praise or blame, the reader who understands this social science statement will of course recognize that this is a description of a very ugly man and he will be amused by the circumlocutory language which you use.[38] If you have a subject matter which by its nature calls for being judged—by which I do not mean moral condemnation necessarily, but it can be very cool—and not judged in terms of good or bad, you don't give a realistic description. The extreme case: try to give a description of a concentration camp or of a Soviet labor camp in perfectly neutral terms. Is it possible? All methodological refinement cannot dispose of the simple fact that human phenomena has this quality of being judgeable; it amounts in effect that you speak about things, about spades without calling them spades, and that's unrealistic.[39] An entirely different question is, if someone—for example, I could easily see a man . . . take a Soviet labor camp; and say of course there are all kinds of bestialities going on there, as they have to, but they are justified by a broader consideration. That is not value-free. That is only a somewhat broader value consideration: this is a deplorable thing; we have to do it for a very good thing. Value judgments. Without these remarks, the whole thing is, how shall I say?—the most stupid red tape-ish bureaucrat couldn't do worse. To speak about human things means to speak of that and that in given cases you can just say there are so and so many people in this room, it's a purely arithmetic statement and there is no so-called value judgment involved in that. But when you say, on the other hand—for example, if you say: This man is six feet high; another one is four feet high, an adult, you can say [that] purely numerically, but you can't help saying, "That's a tall man and that's a particularly short man." And that has important human implications, as you probably know . . . I think whenever—in *very* limited areas for very limited purposes one can avoid that.

And I would truly not advise to make value judgments by hook and by crook, because in many cases a prudent man would abstain from value judgment because of the complexity of the situation; but the complexity of the situation consists not in the difficulty of making value judgments but in the difficulty of reconciling antagonistic value judgments on the same subject. Take the simple case of a war. In some cases, it is really difficult to say from a political [and] not merely legal point of view who is just in beginning the war and who is not. But not because value judgments are impossible: they are very much

possible, but the situation is so complex that an overall value judgment is impossible here. There is a very beautiful example of that in David Hume, who is an uncontestable authority for the people of your persuasion, and though he of course believed in value judgments, as you know, in his description of the Wars of the Roses, that is a magnificent statement about a situation in which an impartial judge would be absolutely unable to settle the question.[xviii] The case for the House of York, I mean, I do not know to what extent the facts of Hume are correct, that I am not able to judge, but I am speaking only of his statement; such a case is at least thinkable. The case for the House of York was this . . . Impossible to decide, but based on both sides on value judgment: this was right, and this was wrong, and this was to the common good, and so on and so forth. That I think—yes?

Student: I hate to ask another question [laughter] because you had to answer so long . . . I think I will ask one more about common sense, because it seems to me that Aristotle really is saying—Aristotle is trying to describe a science of politics which this thing involves, [which] is based on common sense and a particular use of common sense, it seems to me that modern social science, and I am using it as you're using it, that is a small hardcore of —

LS: Yes, sure.

Student: of people radically outlawed—

LS: But the only ones who talk explicitly about the methodological problem, yes.

Student: True. We'll take mostly the people [who] are philosophers who make this explicit, but it seems to me that modern science and modern social science is an extension of common sense, in a way, and that it seems to me that what you're doing is you're saying that there is a kind of quantum leap between common sense as Aristotle is using it and science. To me it seems to be a long continuum of development of making more and more precise certain sorts of ideas and bringing in new ideas and making these precise. And these scientific ideas become matters of common sense. There's a kind of feedback . . . Therefore, I am saying that common sense is more and more refined, in the way Aristotle is trying to refine it, by science. See? So I really am questioning whether there is this kind of quantum leap, therefore on this basis I think you can justify the position of the social scientists—not the extremists but the ordinary run of the mill social scientists.

LS: Ya. The ordinary social scientists and the common sense, especially political scientists, whom I know so much better—that is a very simple and unproblematic statement. I mean, I might disagree in a detail, but in principle that is perfectly above board and no question. But still, this question of common sense which you raise is an absolutely legitimate and important one. It is a very crude expression which is admissible and even necessary at the beginning of any discussion. Now how can I explain it? In the first place, the term common sense stems from Aristotle, and in Aristotle it has a very

[xviii] David Hume, *The History of England* (1778), vol. 2.

limited meaning. We have, say, a sense of touch. That's one sense. Then we have the sense of the sense of touch, and we have the sense of sight, for example, and other senses. Now when I see, when I sense that honey is yellow and sweet, two heterogeneous senses, that cannot be the sense of sight[40] alone, it cannot be the sense of taste alone: somewhere the senses commune. That's the common sense. And when Aristotle tries to show us, for example, that awareness of distances, of size, presupposes the cooperation of a variety of senses, that's the common sense Aristotle . . . I do not know how common sense took on the meaning that it has now. It must have taken it on at least at the end of the eighteenth century, when there came a Scotch school of common sense where it has this meaning[xix] . . .

Now but what do we mean—disregarding the history of the term, what do we mean by it now? Now that's the old story. *The* science, let us not fool ourselves about it, is not social science, not even biology, but physics: theoretical physics. Now what is the *thing*,[41] this here,[xx] in terms of theoretical physics? And you have perhaps heard [in] writers[42] like Whitehead a description of how this would have to be described in terms of physics.[xxi] The thing as thing wouldn't be there. The thing as understood by the theoretical physicist is no longer the thing as we see it, touch it, and mean it, and use it. You see, what you say, that is in a way our fundamental problem to which you allude. Up to the eighteenth century inclusively—the greatest document of that, the last great document of that is Kant—is the view that modern science is the perfection of our natural understanding of the world, i.e., that Newton was only more consistent than we are in ordinary life. We talk about causation all the time. X killed Y: that's a causal statement. But the coherent exposition in the terms of a cosmological system was achieved by Newton.

To come back, the scientific understanding of the world is a perfection of the natural understanding of the world. But then certain things happened, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and in our century, which made that doubtful. Many, all Newtonian things can still be expressed fundamentally in terms of what we know primarily in ordinary language—I mean not the laws, but the laws are to be expressed mathematically, but there is a clear way to that. But if you take the thesis of the theory of relativity, the space–time continuum, the essential difference between space and time loses its significance. Then it is no longer possible to assign something from ordinary human experience to these concepts. Now the term which they use is this: they say now "these definitions are all operational." They[43] no longer indicate what the thing is, but you use them in your reckonings and they lead you to results which are sound, as is shown by the fact that commonsense experience tells you that, say, a bridge built according to such a prescription is a bridge: it doesn't collapse. And to say nothing of rockets. And another way of putting it is that these expressions, the fundamental concepts, have the character of symbols. Of symbols. When I speak of tree as tree, you

---

[xix] The Scottish School of Common Sense is a realist school of philosophy opposed to the philosophy of David Hume; it originated in the ideas of Scottish philosophers Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson, James Beattie, and Dugald Stewart during the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment.

[xx] Strauss evidently gestures toward an object.

[xxi] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929).

can say the word is a symbol, sure, but the symbol can always be[44]—the coin, or rather the bank note, that can always be cashed. Someone [might say]: What do you mean by "tree" here? But this other is also a tree, and then someone says: "Oh, that's a tree" even if he cannot give any definition of it, but he has a certain clarity sufficient on the base of sense perception. That's no longer possible of the fundamental concepts of post-classical physics.

And therefore[45]—and this is perhaps the most important theoretical development of the last hundred years—people became aware of that, that modern science is not simply the perfection of our natural understanding of the world but a specific modification of it. In what that modification consists is a very difficult problem, and there are very few thinkers who have been concerned with that, but somehow it is underlying—[that is] of course a great difference between [the] logical positivism of today and Mill's innocent empiricism. Mill did not know that, but the logical positivists know it in their way. That is their merit, that they know that there is something which can no longer be understood simply by ascent from our common understanding. What the logical positivists do is that they try—and I think that it is putting the cart before the horse—that they try to give an account of commonsense understanding in terms of this derivative understanding active in modern science. I believe that as far as I know, this—all these things I know only second hand—this kind of understanding which becomes obvious in present-day physics was implied already from the very beginning. But it did not come to a clear . . . but at a fairly advanced stage at a different time. So therefore these things one has to take also into consideration. And I think in some ways the social sciences are more obviously revealing than the natural sciences because of the particularly glaring contrast between the methodology, if applied to social matters, and the social matters themselves. And the fact that in the natural sciences, the checks are cashed, you know? I mean, if they work. And in the social sciences we are told we will gradually get a social science as scientific and as effective as natural science. It is a check which has never been cashed; it is a mere promissory note without any backing at the bank and it will never be cashed. It is a wild goose chase. But the reasons for it are different.

Of course one has to go into detail. I remember we had once a discussion here in the seminar [with] colleague of mine, a very good friend of mine, who has a great liking for your kind of people [laughter], and but we are nevertheless friends, [and] I put to him this question: Can you give me a single relevant fact which has been discovered by scientific political science? And he gave me two, of which I remember only one—but I assure you that is not a selective memory; they were of the same caliber and that doesn't make any difference. At the beginning of the Second World War, people in Washington believed you could not station negro soldiers in the South. I believe it was that. And then a social scientist in Washington has a bright idea of making an investigation in the South, and he saw that these officers in Washington simply had forgotten that certain changes had taken [place] in the South, and what would have been impossible perhaps fifty years ago or thirty years ago was perfectly possible now. Now to which I can only say this: that is a mere accident that this was done by a social scientist. A journalist[46] or any politically experienced man could have had this notion and the particular forms[47]—the testing by

Joseph Alsop[xxii] or someone else is in principle as good as that. I mean, if that is what—discoveries of the natural scientists are really breakthroughs, the dimensions of reality come to sight which formerly had not been there. You cannot call this a breakthrough. I don't know what someone else would say for really startling changes, and I mean changes which are not merely ideas fashionable for five or ten years, like that of the people who made the authoritarian personality studies,[xxiii] you must have heard of that. About twenty years ago that was a fashion, that you must make personality studies; and there is a democratic personality, and then an autocratic one (I don't know, I forgot all the terms) or an authoritarian personality. And the examples which I heard were really disgustingly stupid. They were based on a simple freezing of certain extreme "quote liberal unquote" views, and it was only discussed . . . political propaganda. So in other words, a father who was somewhat stern to his naughty child was branded as an autocratic personality. They had never heard of very stern democrats who had been very stern . . . This kind of thing. Today that's forgotten, but fifteen years ago that was looked up [to] as a great practice. That I wouldn't count, this kind of thing I wouldn't count. And whether such things as Freud['s work] can be called a specific social science breakthrough is another question, but even if one grants it as a question, it has really quite a few problems; and you know that attempts to apply it politically are not something to boast of. In the examples [LS laughs] . . . very appropriate. And I'm sorry we did not finish our—we cannot go into everything.

I would like to mention only two points of special importance from today's assignment. Mr. Gray referred to that, the interesting case, interesting complication that the regime is of type alpha and the way of life is of type beta. You remember? There's a remark of that. I mean, you have a democratic regime but you have oligarchic manners and style of life.[48] Well, you have a good contemporary example in England, of course, where the power of the predemocratic tradition is still sufficiently powerful to affect the life of the country in various ways. So I mean Aristotle provided for this kind of thing. And if he did not provide for other types of complications, the question is whether he c*ould not* have been aware of them, then it would be grave; or whether he just did not happen to think of them and then it would not be interesting, not fundamentally interesting.

The other point, which is much more important, concerns Aristotle's reflections on the so-called economic bases of the various regimes. He discussed it especially when he speaks of the democracies, and there is a different—I mean, if the rural population prevails and if the petty merchants prevail and so on; and it would be of some importance to understand that, in its relation to the Marxist view. In other words, in a way Aristotle also says economic things are basic but yet they are not the most important, whereas from the Marxist point of view they are both basic and decisive. And one would have to give some thought to it. I throw this out as a question. Perhaps some of you who read your papers in the sequel and come across this subject would give it some thought.

Ya, and then there is another other point which we may take up on a proper occasion, and that is this: Aristotle treats democracy and oligarchy as the common forms of regimes,

---

[xxii] Joseph Alsop (1910-1989), American journalist and Washington "insider."
[xxiii] Theodor Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950).

and the more sophisticated ones are rather exceptional, and the really good one, the true aristocracy, because what he calls here aristocracies are only so-called aristocracies—and by the way, what he means by aristocracy is extremely simple to say. When in electing officials the consideration of virtue enters, an aristocratic element enters, and the technical form is simply this: if you have election by lot, that is a simply democratic method. No consideration for persons; anyone can come up. But if you choose by raising the hands, as the Greeks say, meaning you look at the candidate, you know for whom you choose, then you are likely to consider also his merits. Therefore election by raising the hands is in principle an aristocratic method. Therefore what we understand by democracy today, where it is taken for granted that merit should be considered and where therefore there is no election by lot to speak of is of course not . . .

Now the point which I was driving at is this: the best polity is very rare. Aristotle doesn't give a single example of it ever having been actual. And this creates a difficulty. Is not what is natural, what is according to nature, the normal? For example, it is according to nature that we have five fingers, that most people have five fingers. But how come that in these matters, in political matters, that which is most natural is the—[xxiv]

Session 1
[1] Deleted "do"
[2] Deleted "make"
[3] Deleted "said Aristotle"
[4] Deleted "around"
[5] Deleted "if you say"
[6] Audible but omitted from original transcript "of physics"
[7] Deleted "/it"
[8] Deleted "now"
[9] Deleted "That is…"
[10] Deleted "and the other"
[11] Deleted "had a very"
[12] Deleted "so this, that is not really"
[13] Deleted "against Aristotle"

Session 3
[1] Deleted "the question after"
[2] Deleted "probably"
[3] Deleted "that"
[4] Deleted "be"
[5] Deleted "and he"
[6] Deleted "is"
[7] Deleted "lives"
[8] Deleted "this function can be made"
[9] Deleted: "is really very"

Session 4:
[1] Deleted "there might be—we might go"
[2] Deleted "with long time—I mean"
[3] Deleted "You wanted to say something? Student: This is Hobbes? LS: Yes."
[4] Deleted "to"

[xxiv] The tape ends at this point.

[5] Deleted “which cannot possibly”
[7] Deleted “this gives”
[8] Deleted “Now this would lead to—”
[9] Deleted “is”
[10] Deleted “how did”
[11] Deleted “Plato’s”
[12] Deleted “that is”

Session 5:
[1] Deleted “Here there are chairs; you can sit if you want to.”
[2] Deleted “it has also”
[3] Deleted “in the case of”
[4] Deleted “you do not”
[5] Deleted “any”
[6] Deleted “how to get”

Session 6:
[1] Deleted “There are things, there may be”
[2] Deleted “regimes are not”
[3] Deleted “why does Aristotle”
[4] Deleted “says why—he”
[5] Deleted “in which it is”
[6] Deleted “that’s not”
[7] Deleted “just as in the course”
[8] Deleted “the kind of thing which”
[9] Deleted “I mean”
[10] Deleted “that the big change”
[11] Deleted “you know”
[12] Deleted “in order”
[13] Deleted “which”
[14] Deleted “the good”
[15] Moved “something similar”
[16] “flutemaker” changed here and elsewhere to “flute maker”
[17] Deleted “Yes? Now let us stop here perhaps.”
[18] Deleted “that is by no”
[19] Deleted “the few”
[20] Deleted “and one way of”

Session 7
[1] Deleted “are part”
[2] Deleted “this for”
[3] Deleted “between love of”
[4] Deleted “it is not merely that”
[5] Deleted “the rule of the”
[6] Deleted “see”
[7] Deleted “let us”
[8] Deleted “you can’t have it in a way because of”
[9] Deleted “that was not”
[10] Deleted “so there are certain”
[11] Deleted “who pursue”
[12] Deleted “what Aristotle”
[13] Deleted “they cannot”
[14] Deleted “not everyone is hurt”
[15] Deleted “people might even”
[16] Deleted “would this be”

[17] Deleted “so that is not the only—Aristotle here gives”
[18] Deleted “many humans”
[19] Deleted “the picture of politics is”

Session 8
[1] Deleted “something which is”
[2] Deleted “there is no”
[3] Deleted “Is this funny?”
[4] Deleted “other”
[5] Deleted “such a regime”
[6] Deleted “there are”
[7] Deleted “prior to any other”
[8] Deleted “is not”
[9] Deleted “we cannot”
[10] Deleted “to all possible conditions”
[11] Deleted “why is”
[12] Deleted “that the roof”
[13] Deleted “a political discussion”
[14] Deleted “discuss it”
[15] Deleted “What is the time?”
[16] Deleted “that it is due to”
[17] Deleted “which is”
[18] Deleted “monarchy”
[19] Deleted “to put”
[20] Deleted “You read the paper. There will be no problem next time. And the other gentleman, you are Mr. what? Lander . . . The first half of book 4 . . . But Mr. Gray will read it. Good.”

Session 9
[1] Deleted “the things about which”
[2] Deleted “has”
[3] Deleted “they”
[4] Deleted “it means, it”
[5] Deleted “But it is—it does”
[6] Deleted “now if one radical”
[7] Deleted “in this”
[8] Deleted “that is the least”
[9] Deleted “let us begin to read where”
[10] Deleted “the most”
[11] Deleted “to”
[12] Deleted “this is”
[13] Deleted “politics”
[14] Deleted “I don’t”
[15] Deleted “can’t say”
[16] Deleted “was a kind of”
[17] Deleted “these are”
[18] Deleted “we don’t have to”
[19] Deleted “let me”
[20] Deleted “he answers”
[21] Deleted “is not”
[22] Deleted “are arrangements, are the arrangements”
[23] Deleted “whether”
[24] Deleted “anything can”
[25] Deleted “you cannot base”
[26] Deleted “that is”
[27] Deleted “I will show”
[28] Deleted “talk of”

[29] Deleted “the rich say”
[30] Deleted “what the other qualities are—”
[31] Deleted “regards something”
[32] Deleted “I mean”
[33] Deleted “that in order”
[34] Deleted “fifty”
[35] Deleted “I mean, may I”
[36] Deleted “number”
[37] Deleted “if you say”
[38] Deleted “you cannot, I mean”
[39] Deleted “And what”
[40] Deleted “it cannot be”
[41] Deleted “in terms”
[42] Deleted “in”
[43] Deleted “do”
[44] Deleted “the symbol”
[45] Deleted “it was, I mean”
[46] Deleted “could have had this”
[47] Deleted “there are”
[48] Deleted “Aristotle”

Session 10: no date
The best regime (book 4, chapter 4)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —gain control over the other elements, and therefore it was less satisfactory. Now what you say—you see, when he speaks of the various democracies and oligarchies, and how magistracies and so on have to be distributed, you have of course to consider the earlier remarks about these various kinds of democracies and oligarchies, where you might have found a solution to some of your riddle, namely, when you refer to the constitutional tricks, as the translator says—the Greek word is sophism. Yes? You didn't say anything about Aristotle's general judgment on such tricks. Or did I overhear something?[i]

Student: Well, he appears to be . . .

LS: Ya, he—

Same Student: By calling them shams.

LS: Ya.[1] He gives a reason, he does not merely express a preference. He gives a reason. What have we found out? Because people are not so dumb in the long run to listen merely to the declarations, but they will also see in what kind of actions and measures these things issue. In other words, a certain measure can be presented as most conducive to the poor, and then the poor after a few years see they are worse off than before, the play collapses. I thought you should have mentioned it because—well, I don't know you, Mr. Snowiss, but I thought this is something which is in agreement with our general present-day views, and you should have given Aristotle credit for that, at least. [LS laughs] Good.

Now I will take up a few other points you have made.[2] What you said about a kind of Jeffersonian democracy is not all together wrong, by no means, but still Aristotle I think is a bit more restrictive than Jefferson was. Now then you come to this regime, to this common regime, it is commonly best: you say the goal is stability or equilibrium, and you rightly don't see why this should be the most preferable point of view of stability in particular, because the Persian Empire was in its way very stable. We have seen on earlier occasion that Aristotle has two criteria which to him are equally important: stability and?

Student: . . .

LS: Well, we are now talking as practical men in book 4 to 6.[3] What is the other crude political criterion apart from stability that came up in the second book, as you may remember? Does anyone remember? Perhaps one of you who has read the paper on the corresponding part of the second book, I forgot which—

Student: Freedom.

---

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: Freedom. So in other words, stability and freedom, and perhaps Aristotle is right that from the point of view of—because in a democracy there is a danger of unfreedom for the rich and in an oligarchy there is a danger of unfreedom for the poor. Perhaps in this middle regime everyone is free. I suggest this only.

Now then you spoke of the status seekers.[ii] I know the phenomenon; I do not know the book [laughter], but I suppose what I know [of] the phenomenon is enough for present purposes.[4] Surely the status seekers are, I believe, something similar to social climbers. Now they are very unpleasant people; I fully agree with you there. But I can't see how Aristotle makes in any way a case for status seekers by making a case for the middle class. Now let us look at the two criteria which we have. Are status seekers or social climbers the kind of men who are born to be revolutionaries, traveling with your loaf of bread and a gun in their suitcases—as Molotov,[iii] as you may remember, did? No, they are peaceful people, they are not revolutionary. They try to make the best of the established order. They are harmless people politically. They may be morally most unattractive, or aesthetically as you say, but they are not—. And are they given to special lawlessness? Generally speaking, I think these climbers know that to commit any crime is not very good for raising one's status. I mean, think what happened to Mr. Accardo[iv] with his tax declaration [laughter] and then you see how unwise that is. You have seen him, I am sure. Then you refer to something which comes a bit closer to the root of your difficulty: "no social mobility," I noted down. That's what Aristotle presupposes. In other words, Aristotle doesn't make allowance for what? For the social—

Student: Social change, for very great social change.

LS: What does this mean? Try to express it in the simple language of Aristotle. What does social change mean? Does the rich become poor? The poor become rich? Or what?

Same Student: Well, I suppose it would imply the possession of . . .

LS: Ya. So, but I think Aristotle did make an argument. He discusses all the time—in the oligarchic institutions, for example, everyone who owns now so and so much becomes by this very fact a member of the sovereign, so there is mobility there. Aristotle was not in favor of social mobility, that is true, but he knew the fact. For example, Aristotle doesn't seem to allow that there are cultured people in the lower orders. What does this really mean? Don't forget all the great blessings you have in this country from grade school and high school: they're absent from others. There was no compulsory education. Education in this sense was limited, in this sense was limited to people who could pay for that. That there could be extremely bright people in the lower order among the poor was of course known, but by virtue of that they would, even if remaining poor, no longer belong simply to the poor.

We have a beautiful example. Socrates was according to Athenian standards a poor man, ya? That's to say he would have had to work to earn his living. But somehow he didn't do that, and

---

[ii] Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (1959).
[iii] Strauss refers to the Bolshevik Vyacheslav Molotov (1890-1986).
[iv] Tony ("Big Tuna") Accardo (1906-1992), Chicago mobster. Accardo succeeded Al Capone as head of Chicago's Outfit. He was indicted for tax evasion in 1960.

the reason was because there were quite a few wealthy men who took care of him—like the foundations[v] take now care of . . . [laughter] Good.[5] But he remained legally, so to speak, a poor man; and of course no one, in speaking of the poor in Athens and their claims, would have thought of people like Socrates as a typical representative of them. What Aristotle means by the poor are the people without any distinction. And it takes us in a very broad and therefore crude and realistic way. For example, wealth is a certain distinction. In other words, nondistinction means here to be nothing but a free citizen, an Athenian citizen, free man. But everyone is that, I mean, except the resident aliens and slaves, of course, but they don't count politically anyway.

So there are various ways of distinctions; there are also ways of the opposite of distinctions, but they are politically absolutely irrelevant, namely, the criminal. Or those who have been exiled which . . . So the distinctions are—the most crude [is] wealth. That you *see* immediately—I mean not quite, because there are also fakes, but generally speaking, if you live long in the city you know whether this fellow is really wealthy or whether he only dresses up for the occasion to create the impression of being wealthy. Then there are the people stemming from the old families; they may not be very wealthy, they may even have become rather poor, but still the respect for the past of Athens, the memory of the great men of the past of Athens and therefore of their descendants gives them some distinction; perhaps also certain habits they have preserved in their economic difficulty. Then there are the men of culture. It's a different form of distinction. The difficulty which you have arises from this fact: you have the simple distinction of the whole citizen body from the crudest but therefore also most visible point of view, and these are the rich, the poor, and the middle class. And in what is now called economics, this economic controversy is the basis of the whole discussion of the middle class.

Now how they are related, how this crude—Aristotle now makes the point that these people [LS writes on the blackboard], the rich, the middle class, and the poor, that these people who have less distinction, much less distinction from the point of view of wealth, may very well have more distinction than both the rich and the poor from another point of view. I mean, that is not in itself an absurd thought. I will give you the very simple reason.[6] Have you ever heard of playboys? Good. Now the sons of rich people have a greater chance of becoming playboys than people who are not so very wealthy.[7]That was surely true prior to the existence of universal education—the poor boy, it was much harder for the poor boy to get a modicum of culture than for people who were reasonably well off. The rich man's sons could have a proclivity to the playboy and therefore would not acquire a serious culture. The poor people's sons were too poor. Therefore, very crudely speaking—but politically speaking means crudely speaking—the chances are that the middle class might be the most solid class in society, as it always is. And I am familiar with people who are very critical of the middle class, which is now called the bourgeoisie—although the bourgeoisie in the strict Marxist sense is of course the ruling class and not the middle class, but then they are called the petty bourgeoisie. I would like to know what you have against the middle class? You may have very good reasons against it, but I would like to know them if possible.

Student: What *I* have against it.

---

[v] Strauss means private foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, which supported and continue to support researchers through sometimes generous grants.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Nothing against it.

LS: Well, what does your criticism—I see, you think Aristotle hasn't argued out his point well enough.

Same Student: In Aristotle's context, a middle-class regime would be distinctly—inherently would be distinctly inferior. And . . . a certain point culture.

LS: Ya, but that overlaps.[8] They are two different considerations.[9] Let me begin at the beginning. For Aristotle, or for the Greeks, all political rights were understood as privileges, you know. They were understood as privileges. You must have a special "virtue," in quotation [marks], for claiming rights. Defects or sufferings are no title to political rights. That's important. You know that many arguments in favor of democracy were based on the fact that the people who need the greatest protection, because they are exploited and so on, [that] they should for this reason have political rights. They were tough people: a defect doesn't give you any rights. A defect makes you an object of compassion but[10] it doesn't give you rights. So you must have some excellence, some virtue. Now one excellence which was not very difficult to have but still it was an excellence [although] not everyone had it, was to be a freeborn Athenian citizen. A freeborn citizen. That was very common. Wealth was a rarer thing because, as Aristotle says, you remember, it so happens that the rich are few. Culture, as Barker says, or education was another claim to distinction. Origin from illustrious family was another claim. All these various claims have to be considered, especially for someone like Aristotle, who does not write for this or that political society but for all political societies. There are always some societies in which some of these elements are important. He has to consider them together, and then he has to raise the question: How can we reach a solution which satisfies these claims, based on some excellences, and yet makes possible a nonchaotic, stable, and free society? That is the problem.

There is one point[11] which interests me particularly, in which I don't remember the wording, but what you said about was this: Aristotle allows us to analyze something when it exists, say, an oligarchy or democracy, but he does not allow us to speak *a priori*. The word occurred, as I understand you to mean, you can't predict on the basis of Aristotle. He does not give us any indices allowing us to predict. That is true. That is absolutely true, because Aristotle's political science is not a predictive science. The question is: Is this a defect or is this a virtue? Now why is Aristotle's political science not predictive? One can use a very simple word: Aristotle was sure that *chance* plays a very great power in human affairs, so that you can speak of proclivities, of likelihoods, and this kind of thing; and you must not forget that a ninety-nine percent probability is still only a probability, ya?[12] Because the practical statesman has to allow for that one percent. Think of the general, because this little improbable march for which the enemy cannot go except . . . they won't do that, they go there and win. And similar things apply to political matters.

Ya, but this word, chance, what does it mean? Aristotle was very wise in using it, I believe, and he gave a very profound analysis of it in the second book of his *Physics*. But let us try to understand in our commonsensical way what chance means in these matters. Aristotle indicates

what a wise policy is. There is a proper order for an oligarchy which wants to remain [an oligarchy], and if it does [not do] that it will not last, so to speak. That's no prediction; fine. Political stupidities, very great political stupidities, where one could be sure [that] wise men would need to rule, can be cancelled by still greater stupidities of the enemy. This simple consideration shows that you cannot predict. In other words, you can never know the degree of stupidity. I mean, if all men are always wise there would be perhaps some possibility of prediction, but people are not always wise. You cannot know who will be right at a given moment—I mean not only one individual, it may also be a body of men. But on the other hand, an unwise policy which could lead to ruin may lead to victory because of a greater stupidity of the enemy. That is one example of what is meant by chance; the difficult task would be to link it up with the general analysis of chance which Aristotle gives in the *Physics*, which I can't do now. Yes?

Student: . . . the point you made about prediction in science, including political science . . . probabilities and not a statement of absolute . . .

LS: Ya, but then the question arises: To what extent are these predictions of value in great matters?

Student: Well—

LS: Ya? And whether therefore the whole notion of prediction is not—I mean, within certain limits,[13] in a way, we have to make predictions all the time: whenever a man makes the decision to spend the summer, say, in Michigan, he makes the tacit prediction that he will be alive, if you call it that way. And that of course is not a prediction proper, that is an implied . . . rather. So we always make anticipations about the future. Now these anticipations may be more well founded, less well founded, and so on and so on. For example, if someone makes holiday plans based on the premise [that] by that time he will have won the Irish sweepstakes, that is rather foolish to do; whereas if he assumes he has the same poor salary he has now, that is much a more sensible . . . In all political matters, when it comes down to it, a prediction which has a high degree of probability is not a prediction properly speaking. I mean, think of the issue now: What is Khrushchev going to do about the German question? That some facts are known, some leaks from his conversation with de Gaulle, etc, etc., and one can have expectations, but who can bear to say: I *know* that. You see, even if the problem—say there are fifteen reasons in favor of Khrushchev's behaving, in spite of certain speeches he made, and only one against it, you cannot be absolutely sure that this one may not become terribly important in the three days before the summit meeting.[vi] Ya?

Student: Well, I—first of all I happen to be committed to, I think, the basic premise of what you're saying, that any situation is ambiguous . . . No, I agree with this, but I also agree when we talked about individuals like Khrushchev or any individual, this kind of predictive analysis is not very good, but I would just like to make two points. In the first place, it seems to me, since anybody would agree with you, with any sophistication, I think, that prediction—

LS: Good, now the question—

[vi] The "German question" refers to what came to be known as the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961.

Student: The absolute—no one makes absolute predictions except if he is a mad man or a fool, doesn't seem to me that this really answers the claim of—

LS: Ya, but that was the point raised here, that Aristotle does not predict that under these and these conditions—no, that he would even admit. Given these and these conditions, oligarchy type 1 would turn into oligarchy [type] 2. That he would do. So your question is more addressed to Mr. . . . than to me. What did you mean—what did you expect from Aristotle by his lacking *a priori* knowledge?

Student:[vii] I went through this rather long . . . scheme, and I was complaining that the utility of the scheme was missing. So far as it is predictive, it . . .

LS: The utility of the scheme which Aristotle gives here, as well as the one given in book 3, is to guarantee exhaustiveness. These are the alternatives; these and these are the possible combinations. That's all he does. The deliberative faculty obviously must be either to all or to some, in a republic . . . monarchy. And then it may extend to all matters, and it may extend only to some matters. And furthermore, if there is to be a preparatory council, election to which—as you know, everyone who prepares an agenda has some influence on the outcome of the deliberation. Then election to the preliminary council, or however you call it, can be done by lot or can be it done by raising the hands; meaning [that] by lot, anyone has a chance, but by raising hands, he must be in some way or another an outstanding man, I mean a man who has the confidence and respect of his fellow citizens. You are dissatisfied, naturally, because I didn't speak about—

Student: . . .

LS: Mr. . . . , can you give the answer?

Different Student: I wasn't referring to what you just said. The scheme of—he starts off this section by saying he's going to associate certain types of regimes with certain types of social structure, if I can use the term social structure.

LS: Ya, all right.

Same Student: Then he goes on to discuss his quality and quantity distinction. But then, as I said at the end of treating this, when you have a certain type of regime, oligarchy, only then can you know that you have a certain type of social structure from the criteria that he sets down on quality and quantity. You can't know that a certain type of regime will issue from a certain type of social structure.

LS: All right. What does he—I don't understand you, but I'll try. What does this mean? You have a certain social structure, say, a preponderance of a certain type of wealthy people, such and such a distribution of the common people, and all this sort of thing. Of course you cannot predict

[vii] This seems to be the student to whom Strauss suggests the question was "more addressed" than to Strauss.

what regime there will be. There may be a regime which doesn't fit them because of old traditions which still linger on, or because of some special ineptness because of a great aversion to change which may have very good reasons in a given situation. All kinds of things. That is a point I wanted to take up, the difference between Marxian concern with social–economic structure and Aristotle's concern. For Aristotle, there is no such simple relation as it appears to be at least in the ordinary . . . Marxist view. It doesn't follow. A given society may have the wrong kind of . . . and for some reason that may last, for example, there may be great crisis or wars and this kind of thing so they cannot afford a change. This [kind of] thing can happen.

Now let us turn to a coherent discussion and we may have a better occasion to take up . . . Now let us begin at the beginning of our assignment today, 1295a, where Aristotle indicates the subject.

Mr. Reinken: 1295a?

LS: 25, "what the best regime and what the best life is for most cities and for most human beings." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.
We have now to consider what is the best constitution and the best way of life for the *majority* of states and men. In doing so we shall not employ a standard of excellence above the reach of ordinary men, or a standard of education requiring exceptional endowments and equipment, or the standard of a constitution which attains an ideal height. We shall only be concerned with the sort of life which most men are able to share and the sort of constitution which it is possible for most states to enjoy. (1295a25-32)

LS: Ya. Well, this declaration of the intention is not new. Aristotle has said at the beginning that just as the gymnastic trainer may teach not only how the best-equipped men can become most outstanding champions but will also train the average man in a kind of average training, the same applies to the politician. Aristotle, after having given a complete survey of other kinds of regimes, the various kinds of democracies, oligarchies and so on, he turns to this other great question. Now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
The 'aristocracies,' so called, of which we have just been treating—

LS: In other words, not the aristocracies strictly so-called, but certain kinds of regimes in which some importance is attached to merit as merit, but also to wealth as wealth, and these are the so-called aristocracies. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
either lie, at one extreme, beyond the reach of most states, or they approach, at the other, so closely to the constitution called 'polity' that they need not be considered separately and must be treated as identical with it. The issues we have just raised can all be decided in the light of one body of fundamental principles. If we adopt as true the statements made in the *Ethics*—first, that a truly happy life is a life of goodness lived in freedom from impediments, and second that

goodness consists in a mean—it follows that the best way of life is one which consists in a mean, and a mean of the kind attainable by every individual. Further, the same criteria which determine whether the citizen-body have a good or bad way of life must also apply to the constitution; for a constitution is the way of life of a citizen-body. (1295a33-1295b2)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. That is unnecessarily unliteral: the regime is some way of life of the city. Now what does this mean? First and last . . . the regime is the way of life of the city. Therefore, both the city and the regime can possess virtue and vice. Why? Because a way of life, which means of course here a human way of life, is either virtuous or vicious or something in between; and therefore the regime can be either virtuous or vicious.[14] Why can't the *polis* be virtuous or vicious? Because the *polis* receives its character, its moral character from the regime. The thought implied in this sentence, that the regime is the way of life, of course turns up in various ways, although not in this simple formula, at all times. I have here a passage from Burke's speech on conciliation with America.

"My hold of the Colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties, which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron . . . But, until you become lost to all feeling of your true interest and your natural dignity, freedom they can have from none but you. This is the commodity of price, of which you have the monopoly . . . [And so on. The British freedom, these things, your letters of office, your instructions, your suspending clauses, your navigation act—LS] These things do not make your government. Dead instruments, passive tools as they are, it is the spirit of the English communion that gives all their life and efficacy to [these instruments].[viii] It is the spirit of the English Constitution, which, infused through the mighty mass, pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates, vivifies every part of the empire, even down to the minutest member."[ix]

What Aristotle says has something to do with that. There was a Greek writer prior to Aristotle, Isocrates, an orator, who said the regime is the soul of the city.[x]Aristotle could also have said that: that which animates a city, which gives it direction, which establishes its specific end that it pursues, that is the regime. But the real difficulty, as before, as Mr. . . . has very well realized, the thought for commonwealth now is not the best regime. We have seen [that] the best regime, the most divine regime is kingship. And then aristocracy strictly so-called, that was sketched—only sketched—toward [the] end of book 3. Let's forget about it; and Aristotle has[15] given us some reason why we should forget about it. In these more advanced times, advanced chronologically, these things are not likely to come. Let us look for what is the best in the developed cities of our age, i.e., Aristotle's age. This . . . best.

Now Aristotle makes[16] one point, referring explicitly to his *Ethics*: if it has been well said in the *Ethics* that the happy life is the unimpeded life according to virtue, and that virtue is in the middle, is "meanness," then it is necessary that the mean life, the middle life, is the best. But that is immediately specified here. Aristotle alters the thesis of the *Ethics* decisively. Aristotle speaks

---

[viii] In Burke: "them"

[ix] Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq., On Moving his Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, March 22, 1775.

[x] Isocrates, *Orations* 12, *Panathenaicus*.

of such a mean, such a virtue as everyone can achieve. Virtue in a strict sense, Aristotle makes it very clear in the *Ethics* [LS writes on the blackboard] —the mean, here are the extremes. The mean is not mediocrity; the mean is the peak.[xi] Because as I said on a former occasion, if you avoid the defects of the faulty extremes and combine the advantages of the extremes, you must have a principle different [from][17] the extremes, and that principle is a higher principle. That applies even to the regime he is discussing now. But he does not take it in the strictest view in which it is not feasible for everyone to become virtuous, which is a common form of virtue which you can reasonably expect from large bodies of men. In other words, the deliberate deviation from the highest. The whole argument of the *Politics* is very complex, and perhaps today's assignment is particularly difficult from this point of view. The argument of Aristotle goes from the discussion of the most divine regime in book 3, via this, which we discuss today, to the middle-class regime, to the best polity described in books 7 and 8, and we must gradually understand that movement.

Now the solution then which Aristotle suggests is the rule of the middle class. Middle class is understood, to begin with, in an absolutely external sense. That is Aristotle's peculiar wisdom and sobriety, that he is not contemptuous of the obvious. The most obvious is the fact that in every society, you have rich and poor people (he has said this more than once), and you also have people in the middle. And the general notion of the mean is not entirely irrelevant here. Just as we have seen on a higher level of reflection that virtue is a mean, there is perhaps some virtue in the middle as such from an external point of view. Now how does he show [this], that is developed in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
In all states— (1295b2)

LS: No, no, no. Wait. We cannot read everything; we must skip that. But here is a great step we have to consider. Aristotle brings this up in connection with a question: a regime which can be common to all cities, and that regime is the regime of the middle class. Does he not presuppose that there is a middle class in existence everywhere? Now forget modern notions of bourgeoisie, and trade, and commerce, and industry: just people, whatever their source of livelihood may be; it can be can of course be farming as well as everything else. Is it true that there is everywhere a middle class? At any rate, that is a great problem, because if there is not everywhere a middle class, or the middle class is so weak as to be politically irrelevant, then you cannot have this most common regime everywhere. But Aristotle still doesn't talk nonsense. He says: If there is to be a best regime which is possible in every city, that can only be if there is a sufficiently strong middle class there. The middle class[18] is in the middle. What is the virtue of being in the middle? Aristotle never talks abstract[ly] [so] that he speaks of means in all things; he thinks of the mean which we are here concerned: people sandwiched, human beings sandwiched in between the rich and the poor. Sandwiched in: that means limited. They are more limited by an outside social force than the two others. Being hemmed in, they are more likely to listen to reason. He refers twice in this context [to the notion] that they are least likely to get what they want by force, and therefore they are most likely to listen to reason. More generally stated, they are most apt for virtue, which doesn't mean that there cannot be rich people who are virtuous and poor people in their way who are virtuous but the greatest aptitude, generally or[19] sociologically speaking rests

[xi] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1107a7-8.

there. Now we read in b25, where he says the *polis* desires to be [or] consists of equals. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
A state aims at being, as far as it can be, a society composed of equals and peers; and the middle class, more than any other, has this sort of composition. It follows that a state which is based on the middle class is bound to be the best constituted in respect of the elements of which, on our view, a state is naturally composed. (1295b26-29)

LS: Yes, let us stop there. Now what does this mean? The *polis* itself is a society of equals and similars, Aristotle says. This is what the *polis* by nature tends to be. What does that mean?[20] Let us look at the facts before we try to understand this seemingly abstruse statement. What is a *polis* from the most external descriptive point of view? A society consisting of free male adults. Free male adults. The addition of women through suffrage is only a secondary thing, and of which Aristotle didn't approve and didn't think. The *polis* is a society of free male adults, ya, but [21]a trades union is the same thing. But they are free male adults who help one another toward security all around, but more than that—that would be mere life—towards the good life. Good life can be understood in a strict sense, an exacting sense, and a looser sense. Aristotle of course is only thinking of the looser sense. This cooperation of the free male adults is a kind of equality. There is no *a priori* reason why there should be inequality among them, because they all are supposed to do that. But then we are confronted with an obvious difficulty: not all citizens are in fact equal. You see also incidentally why Aristotle's first definition of the *polis* and of the citizen was given in terms of democracy and why democracy and oligarchy, two forms . . . not all citizens are in fact equal, there's a great inequality; and again, what is the greatest or gravest inequality which meets the unarmed eye? That of the rich and the poor. You remember the strong emphasis of Aristotle on that.

So where does the middle class come in? It must be understood from this point of view. The city wants to be a society of equals; it is in fact a society of unequals. How can we get the maximum of equality in spite of this great inequality? Answer: through the preponderance of the middle class. The middle class are as such equal among themselves. I mean, we don't have to use very fine instruments for that, and you can of course say the poor are equal among themselves and the rich are equal [among themselves]. You can say that. But the middle class mediates between the two radically unequal and therefore radically opposed parts of the community. Thus[22] the middle class is a group of equals which equalizes the city. Aristotle may be absolutely wrong, but this is what he means. Practically speaking, the middle class has something in common with the rich: property, fear of confiscation. It has something in common with the poor: they are not rich; they are familiar with the possibility of want somehow. That links them with the poor. That is the point. You wanted to say something before; I simply forgot to call on you.

Student: . . . in the polity, does the middle class have a monopoly on arms? I mean, I ask this question in terms of [the question], to what extent are there real limits on what the middle class can do?

LS: Aristotle knows that. I mean, anticipating the later developments, or rather answering a question I raised before, there is not everywhere a middle class which can be helpful. You may

have a very powerful oligarchy and a very powerless *dēmos*—the early Middle Ages. What can you have? Only an oligarchy; the knights, the cavalry in the Middle Ages, which Aristotle did not know, and in the Greek middle ages of which Aristotle knew. Then you have a situation in which you have a very powerful *dēmos* and a couple of wealthy families, relics of olden times or perhaps some wealthy merchants or whatever they may be. There, the powerful *dēmos*—I mean, who is numerically superior, who defends the city and so on and so on, and whose collective wealth by far surpasses the wealth of these few people—they will have a democracy. And the utmost which can be expected is that they might, for reasons of mere "quote expediency unquote," refrain from confiscating property because because they all themselves are some property owners. You know that even the poor does not mean paupers, of course. The paupers[23] had never political importance, the paupers as paupers. Even Marx's proletariat is of course not [made up of] paupers. They are paupers in perhaps extreme states of unemployment, you know, and they approach it, and then they don't take it like paupers. So paupers, that is true to say—I mean, it is a sad story and some sad commentary on the compassion of the human race, but paupers never played any political role.[24] The poor are small farmers, for example, and they have a certain interest in the laws of inheritance, you know, and the confiscatory taxes which milk the rich: sure, they would have no objection [to those], but on certain conditions it could be shown to them that if they milk the rich and they move out to another city—flight of capital—that this would do them some harm, so they may even refrain from taxing them so much. As it is a democracy . . . [25] In both cases it would be impossible. So the best regime which is most commonly possible is not universally possible. That must be clear. Was this an answer to your question? Good. Yes?

Student: My question stems from a concern whether Aristotle sufficiently established whether power will be less likely to corrupt the middle class than it would any other of the classes. For example, I can think of historical instances where the middle class has shown itself quite willing to develop the middle class, quite willing to hang onto to power and to assure itself . . . quite extreme, early years of French history, for example.

LS: Right.

Same Student: Well, take the July Monarchy and toward the end of the July Monarchy.[xii]

LS: Yes, but I must disappoint you, because the July Monarchy was in fact—and that was the reason, the objection to that by thoughtful men like Tocqueville—was the rule of the *rich*. You can say the bourgeoisie, provided you say the rich bourgeoisie. That was the rule of the rich; the bankers played a decisive role and the more moderate people like Tocqueville were for this reason in opposition to this bourgeois king Louis Philippe. They tried to get, you can say, some more middle class rule, say, in '48, but that became impossible because the poor, the proletariat, came in and created great complications which frightened the French peasants for their property, and so for their protection they turned to Napoleon III.[xiii] And there was no middle-class rule then, either. The Third Republic could perhaps be called that way—you know, what was

[xii] In the July Revolution of 1830, French King Charles X was overthrown and government under King Louis-Phillippe followed from 1830-1848, the period known as the July monarchy.
[xiii] Napoleon III was elected President of France in 1848 and made himself Emperor (1852-1870).

established after 1870, and this was relatively stable.[xiv] I mean, you cannot define the stability of a regime in terms of the stability of the given administration. It is surely a defect, this constant turning out of ministers, but France was an amazingly stable country nevertheless. The French constitution was destroyed, as you know, but—

Student: . . . France was stable, it was also you can call it a stability of stagnancy at this time.

LS: Yes—

Mr. Reinken: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: . . .

LS: No, but one point regarding stagnancy. What does stagnancy mean? What does it mean? Lifelessness? Death? That is of course bad, but if it means no great social change, that is not necessarily a defect. From Aristotle's point of view it was not a defect at all for one deeper reason, which is one of the great differences between our orientation and Aristotle: we are much more sanguine than earlier men were. We have much greater hope from change, much greater hope; somehow the old belief that change really is likely to be change for the better, i.e., progress, still lingers on. Aristotle had the view that change is more likely to be change for the worse than change for the better. You remember the discussion in book 2: you may get a better law but you also destroy a certain habituation, and therefore you endanger the habits. So stagnancy, as you call it, that simply wouldn't exist. I mean, death of civic spirit, but that cannot be called [stagnancy]: that's corruption, that's not stagnancy. Stability was regarded as the most important consideration. Yes?

Student: . . . It seems to me that if Aristotle's arguing that the middle class forms the most virtuous and also the most stable—

LS: Stabilizing.

Same Student: Stabilizing. Then you would have to, it seems to me, ask about this proposition from the light of many historical examples, as you have been doing. And it seems there are plenty of historical examples where the middle-class support of a regime is neither stabilizing nor is it virtuous, perhaps, this example, take the Nazis—

LS: Yes, give an example so I can see what you are—

Same Student: How about the Nazi party? Here we have, it seems to me, a preponderance of petty bourgeois which we have to qualify what we mean by this a great deal, but I think that the elite in this case would likely lead many of the sort of indigenous revolutions going on now, that is it was a middle class movement, it was an nationalist movement—

[xiv] The Third Republic lasted from 1870 to 1940.

LS: I mean, if one speaks of the middle class, one would have to say a middle class in a process of complete disintegration, a dispossessed middle class. And that these people can become vicious, this applies of course to all. I think of the effect of inflation, but I believe if one looks more closely at the most famous of world happenings, which were the classes who supported Hitler most powerfully,[26] who came up later on [when] everyone was caught. I mean, if you look at the election records—which I only remember dimly, but the substantial facts I believe I remember well enough—there was surely a substantial support from the rich. Big industry. There was the first class of people who became very powerful; they were the Protestant peasants of northern Germany. That is generally not considered. I mean, the vague word "petty bourgeoisie" doesn't mean that; they were wealthy, partly very wealthy, extremely wealthy landowners in the northwestern part of Germany. There was where the terror began in Germany. Ya, surely the white-collar workers played a considerable role, you know,[27] people who wanted absolutely to distinguish themselves from the manual workers,[28] as it were the noncomissioned officers of industry and commerce who tried to act the part of officers. You can put it this way, yes, but that doesn't exist here for Aristotle.

Same Student: No, I admit this is a—this sort of movement, this nationalist movement, which is a middle class nationalist movement, is very complicated and—

LS: Very. Yes, that's the word.

Same Student: I'm saying this as I restate here Aristotle's proposition, but I am saying that it seems to me that Aristotle failed to make an important qualification on this proposition, that is that this stabilizing effect and virtuosity effect of the middle class only holds under conditions of a fairly stable economy or an expanding economy. If you have a contracting economy it seems then the middle class doesn't act in this stabilizing and virtuous way.

LS: I fully agree with you, but I would say we cannot leave it at this remark, and there will be other criticisms of individual statements of Aristotle which we are bound to make with equal justice. We have to push these individual criticisms back to the principle, and the principle can be stated very simply as follows: Aristotle did not know modern society. This society[29] where such words as nationalism, as capitalism, as ideologies, you know, this simply doesn't exist in Aristotle's horizon. And the great task which we would have in order truly to appropriate the sound things in Aristotle would be to analyze these modern phenomena which we take for granted, take for granted, to understand their inner genesis, you know what I mean? I will describe it. I think—well, remember such things as Marx's analysis in his *Capital*, what does it prove? He doesn't begin with the capital in a way in which the *Wall Street Journal* would speak about these matters: he goes back to the origins. The origin is something, as he puts it, like commodities. And then he says here: Yes, but what is a commodity? A commodity is not the beginning, the beginning is things we need for our warmth, true or fancied doesn't make any difference. When he tries to develop that out of our primary need (he doesn't make the distinction between need and fancy), exchange emerges, because you've got something that I don't have and vice versa. Exchange. And out of that, money. That is Aristotle, as[30] [Marx] himself admits. So in other words, the question arises: modern capital is not simply money; after all, in the older societies commerce was rather marginal, the chief economic activity being agriculture. But this enormous complication and its infinite consequences which affect us every

day we cannot understand if we do not begin from scratch. "Scratch" is not prehistoric man of whom we know infinitely little; scratch is the only coherent attempt made to give a detailed analysis of a premodern, precapitalist society, and that was done by Aristotle.[31] Plato gave this analysis in his way, which means it is not very easily accessible, because then you have to study Platonic dialogues, where most of the things are not said. Aristotle's book is infinitely straightforward, compared with Plato, at any rate, and here we have that.

So what I am driving at is this. The Greek city-state, you have heard this expression, that is so unintelligible. When we look at Aristotle himself, he didn't say he was analyzing the Greek city-state: he is analyzing the city, and the city is for him the natural association of men on the highest level, the natural association sufficient for a truly human life, necessary and sufficient for truly human life. And this society is characterized by the fact [that] it is natural because it corresponds to men's natural capacities. I gave this example: a society in which there must be a considerable amount of acquaintance, personal acquaintance among the members, within set limits; you cannot know millions, you can know directly or through others a thousand, a few thousand. Also that it is really taken in in one view, a beautiful Greek word which I cannot better translate by this long English translation, or as you know *synoptos*, a world can well be taken in a broad view. We will come across it in the seventh book.[xv] I mean, Babylon, which was a village compared to Chicago, was for Aristotle unbearably big because, as Aristotle put it, when the enemies were in Babylon in one part, the other part didn't know anything of it. What kind of connection and coherence . . . existed. Modern men have succeeded to an amazing degree to find compensations for that. After all, we can see our presidential candidates—everyone can see them on the TV, but the question is: Is this the same thing as when[32] everyone so to speak has gone to school with them? I exaggerate a bit, [but] it makes a big difference. The things which people say, for example, about Vice President Nixon—you know, some people think very highly of him some think less highly of him—are ultimately matters of guessing for people like ourselves. The facts which we know are not conclusive. If we would know him intimately we could say which of these interpretations is true. This would be of some importance for our . . .

But let me give another example. The problem of the metropolitan area, you know this great problem, where large aggregates as large aggregates—they are too big, too big; something has to be done about them. But it surely is a social ill of the greatest order[xvi] —beginning because these face to face societies are already molded, they are already what they are, by the political society, by the regime within which they take place. The natural model—I would say, to be more cautious, the most convenient model at our disposal is Aristotle's analysis of society. For example, the distinction between state and society remains a mere datum which we take for granted, and then we make a beautiful definition on the basis of all these assumptions. If we do not go back to that simpler situation which antedates the split, the distinction between state and society—again I tried to give a sketch of that when I spoke of the difference between Locke and Aristotle . . . that is the only reason why I am so interested in that: I would like to understand. And I think as social scientists it is our duty to try to understand. Aristotle truly starts from scratch; that he is a genius of the first order and does not write for the meanest capacities who, in addition, would like to read as they run is unfortunate. But on the other hand, it is also fortunate

[xv] 1326b24.
[xvi] The tape was changed at this point.

because he compels us to think. And in Aristotle, one can say, all relevant, all the fundamental considerations are in.

I mentioned on a former occasion and maybe [will on] a future occasion the great problem that modern society as we know it is unthinkable without technology in a very emphatic sense, and the fact that you say there was also some technology of primitive people doesn't help you any to understand *this* kind of technology. But this technology, what that is, is very hard to say, very hard to say what we mean by that word. It is of some help to realize that what we understand by technology is not possible without science. We know that not all technology is based on science; many inventions are made by nonscientists. But on the other hand, many inventions would be absolutely impossible without science.[33] Science has here a social importance which it did not have at all in former times. Even such a master of science as Aristotle did not believe that it was possible or desirable that science should have such a significance. Aristotle may have been wrong; surely he may have been wrong, but by understanding the reasons why he took this stand, why he made these remarks—for example, slow change of laws and no slow change in arts, and all these kinds of things—we have become perhaps better analysts of our problems. I mean, I am sure that real thought about that[34] would shed some light immediately on the problem of higher education, for example, which is to a large extent an education in science and what its implications are.

Connected with that, [and] that is the last point I would like to make, is this: there are no ideologies. When Aristotle presents the position of the rich and the poor, there is no [ideology]—I mean, that is one of the commonest errors of interpretation. There is no ideology. The rich[35] are straightforward, they say directly what they think, this is . . . they say the wealthy contribute much more to political society than the poor; therefore they ought to have to say much more. And they give some other reasons: a wealthy man is less likely to embezzle than a decker, and this kind of thing. Straightforward political arguments, they don't mean more than they say, and no amount of psychoanalysis or social analysis or what have you have anything whatever to do with that. There's no doctrine of the whole of the historical process—nothing of this kind.

I would venture to say this, and[36] let me limit myself to this point: I think that these ideologies, as we call them, as we have them today, are modifications of what the enlightenment meant. In the great enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, people thought that spreading the philosophic truths about man and society is the most important thing for improving society; that out of this grew the habit of relying on such general theories for justifying or rationalizing political action. Whether that may have still further prehistory in the religious tradition of the West, that's a long and difficult question, but certainly in Aristotle that doesn't exist. Aristotle is sure that the true understanding of society is linked up with the true understanding of the whole. That is the truth of the statement which Mr. . . . made at the beginning, that there is some connection, to put it mildly, between Aristotle's *Politics* and his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, surely. But the theoretical errors—say Plato's, say, Parmenides's or Heracleitus's and so—they do not include a different political orientation. You know? This is just as a difference, take today, between two nuclear physicists may be politically utterly irrelevant, of course, and the same is true of the difference of philosophers. We must really liberate ourselves from this notion. The attempt is frequently made, especially by Marxists and crypto-Marxists but also by others, to find a kind of correlation, say, between Plato's and Aristotle's political philosophy and his

metaphysics, and a supposed political philosophy, say, of Heracleitus or of Thales to his metaphysics. That is a mere postulation without any shred of evidence. In other words,[37] all these concepts which have grown out naturally,[38] i.e., without any malice aforethought, out of the modern development, such concepts like ideologies and so, must be reconsidered. They become catchalls which are no longer helpful for analysis. And of course [it is] infinitely more convenient to use them without thinking, I know that, but we are not permitted to do so.[39] There are certain contexts in which it doesn't make such a great difference, I would also admit that, I am not a fanatic; but still, to the extent to which we here in such a class are concerned with the theoretical problems, we have to pay attention. [40]Let me state it generally: All typically modern concepts are derivative from the classical concepts, and one cannot understand these modern concepts without having understood those concepts out of which these modern concepts were developed,[xvii] therefore especially Aristotle, not because I have any family relations with Aristotle [laughter] but because Aristotle is simply the most explicit and meticulous analyst of these things whom we have. Yes?

Student: Well, I can't really answer everything you said [laughter], but I really think that you're closer, I mean, your position is closer to the modern view than you might think in many ways. I don't think that the modern view simply rejects everything classical people have said—

LS: I know.[41] I mean, I really am a friend of peace and not of war, but I must say [that] this sensible attitude, which is humanly so likeable, is theoretically dangerous. Because these tough guys who say that's just bunk compel us to take the possibility seriously. The others in their niceness, peaceableness bury the problem. And if we praise them for their peaceableness, we must blame them for their burial.

Same Student: Well, I just want to say one more thing, and that was that it seems to me in really analyzing the classical literature of political things and political foundations this is a useful way of beginning, and I think to understand our modern concepts, this is useful in the way that you put it. But it seems to me when you first began this course, from the first day, you said what you were doing was—I don't know how you put it, that Aristotle in a sense can replace modern social science, the study of Aristotle—

LS: No, hold on—

Same Student: can, and today now it seems to me you modified this view to say something a little bit different.

LS: Very good. [Laughter] But this is not necessarily—have you ever taught? Have you ever done any teaching?

Same Student: Yes, I have taught. Absolutely**.**

LS: I mean, in a college or graduate school—

Same Student: No, only in . . . [Laughter]

[xvii] Strauss taps on the table for emphasis during this general statement.

LS: Yes, but perhaps [laughter]—I don't know how it is if you teach three . . . that may be slightly different—

Same Student: No, I . . . this is a useful pedagogic device.

LS: Yes, more than that.[42] You see, I would put it this way, and not only do I so to say shoot the gun so that everyone listens. No, much more than that. This sweeping and unqualified statement must be qualified, but it would be indefensible and would be mere racket[xviii] if it were not true. Now I will try to show you [laughter] what I mean. Now[43] let me put it this way. I remember—I forget the exact word, but let me assume I said that Aristotle provides us with *the* framework for understanding social matters. I repeat that. [LS writes on the blackboard] And here is an entirely different framework; that's the typical SS framework, social science. Yes? I mean, I know that there are various subdivisions but they have something crucial in common. Good.

Now what I say is this, and the true-born representatives of that say that's bunk. Now what is the difference from what I say now? What's the difference? Indeed, I still believe that's bad.[44] The SS is really bad, inadequate; but it grapples with something with which Aristotle did not grapple—that's its merit—and that is modern society. Now modern society rests on certain fundamental concepts—allow me to put it in this crude way, certain fundamental premises. And they are here. [LS writes on the blackboard] I don't know whether you are helped by the pictorial representation. I am. [Laughter] They need certainly some verbal symbols in order to . . . [Laughter] Now what I say is this, this here [LS points to board], this here, which Aristotle did not know, can only be understood as a radical modification of the Aristotelian view. So the fundamental framework *is* the Aristotelian framework. That is what I honestly think, and what I (how should I say?) vaguely said at the beginning . . . And I give you one example now, which is probably not good enough, but I have to speak of that because we have certain time limitations and we have to think of them. Now in this section, which is very important and very difficult, Aristotle devotes the last part of it to . . . the question to the variety of politics, but as a whole. And therefore he wants also to find out, naturally, being a political scientist, the specific political institutions characteristic of each of the various regimes. And that he does in an almost mathematical way. The text is in very bad shape, and[45] in this particular section that creates great difficulties and has created [them] for some centuries. Now what is the main point which Aristotle makes? He says there are three elements which we must presuppose in every political society, and this the deliberative element, the magistrates, and the judiciary. Does this remind you of something?

Student: The modern breakdown of government into judicial, executive, and legislative.

LS: So in other words, this is a point which still survives. We still seem to be compelled to make this distinction. But if we want to understand *our* distinction, because even if someone questions it today, you know, and says it is still only old stuff, a substitute for it can only be understood as being a substitute for that. So the least you have to do would be to go back, say, to the text of the American Constitution, for example. But that is older, that is Aristotle. Therefore we have to raise the question: What is the difference between Aristotle's teaching on this subject, the

[xviii] This word is uncertain.

tripartition, and the modern teaching? How would you proceed, by the way, technically in the simplest way to clarify that issue? I mean, Aristotle you know. We have seen the end of book 4, that's easy. But what about the modern view? What would you do?

Student: Begin with Montesquieu?

LS: That is already very high. I would begin with a text of the American, the United States Constitution, all right; but then I [would] go back to the *Federalist Papers*, and then the *Federalist Papers* tell me to read Montesquieu. I don't have to have any knowledge of my own. It's as simple as that. Good. Now and Montesquieu gave this description in a famous chapter, being a description of what? Of the English constitution. This is the famous chapter 6 of book 11 of the *Spirit of Laws*. This in its turn is modelled—and that is already a part of scholarship (does everyone know that?), but of a very widespread scholarship—on an ancient piece which in a way is closer to Montesquieu and the *Federalist Papers* than is Aristotle, and this is the historian, Greek historian of Rome [LS writes on the blackboard] Polybius, who devoted his sixth book to a description of the constitution of Rome. That is a text which you could read easily in four hours; assuming that you have to read quite a few papers of *Federalist Papers*, five hours. That is all you need to understand, but you have to read. Now let us go step by step. What is the most striking difference between the Aristotelian teaching and the teaching embodied in the United States Constitution? We have the three elements. They are—that is important; they are preserved, but they are modified. How are they modified?

Student: The Aristotelian . . .

LS: What?

Same Student: The magistrate—

LS: Ya, the magistrates, the ruling offices, ya.

Same Student: Yes, it's difficult to tell, exactly, if this means the executive, then that's—

LS: Good! That is very good what you say, that is the beginning. What do you say?

Student: The difference which I noted, that struck me anyway, was that we've seen in Aristotle that both the deliberative and the magistrate branch get initiated or had something to say about the legislation . . .

LS: Who had something to say about legislation?

Same Student: Both the magistrates and the deliberators.

LS: Only the magistrates, only in a secondary way. The most simple beginning would be this: Aristotle makes one additional point which is important: we have three elements, which is the most important from Aristotle's point of view, the highest and most authoritative from Aristotle's point of view? Mr. Snowiss?

Student: The deliberative.

LS: The deliberative. What word is the equivalent to the deliberative—

Same Student: Well, our Supreme Court.

LS: No, no. Let us forget about all complications. What is the authoritative part, according to the United States Constitution?

Same Student: The people?

LS: No, that is good, but—

Students: The legislative.

LS: The legislative, yes. The first thing we have to note is a substitution of legislative for deliberative. A great step. Because deliberative includes such things of course also as war and peace, which in this country which happen to be delegated to the legislative, although the legislative as such has nothing to do with war and peace. That's a matter of individual measures, should one declare war to Japan after Pearl Harbor: that's not a legal question, that's a political question. I read to you a passage from a man who is quite famous and has something to do with American Constitution, called John Locke. Paragraph 3, i.e., right at the beginning of the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*: "Political power, then, I take to be a right of making laws with penalties of death," and so on and so on. Locke identifies political power with legislative power. Why he does that is a long question. But that would surely be —Aristotle never does that. Nor does Hobbes do that. Locke does it.

Now once we understand that, I believe we can understand also the other change, from the magistracies to executive. What does the executive execute? The laws. So the magistracy, while it is also dependent on laws, does not have this emphasis on the execution of laws; and that difference you can see from this simple example. When General Eisenhower invaded the European continent in 1944, he obeyed an order of the Commander in Chief, the president of the United States, and he acted on the basis of a law empowering him to do so. But somehow General Eisenhower's command to General Patton and the other one, those are not legal measures. I mean, I don't say they are illegal, but they are not measures of law officers. You see?[46] While it is within the framework of the law, it cannot reasonably be understood as an execution of law as you could [understand] an arrest of a speeding driver as obviously an execution of the law. I do not now go into the question which position is broader, more comprehensive, or narrower; I only try to show how one must go about establishing these differences in principle.

Now let me turn to Polybius. Polybius has nothing to do with that sort of thing, but Polybius also described a mixed regime, and he does this at much greater detail than Aristotle does anywhere.[xix] And the mixed regime, i.e., one in which there is a monarchic or quasi-monarchic,

[xix] Polybius, *Histories*, book 6.

an aristocratic, and a popular element. The monarchic element in Rome,[47] the consuls; the aristocratic element, the Senate; and the popular assemblies are the popular element. The same is done by Montesquieu: the king, the courts, the commons. But what's the difference? Montesquieu combines the Aristotelian distinction between the three powers with the notion of the mixed regime. Polybius does not do that. And that is first of all a brute fact, but what does this mean? Polybius, *the* theme you can say is that of checks and balances. That is not Montesquieu; that is Polybius. The checks and balances alone will prevent misuse of power. Simple idea. And just as it is in Montesquieu, it is in the American Constitution. But one thing is absolutely striking: in Polybius there is no principle underlying the division of power. Polybius as it were says: I take the whole political power and divide it into three chunks so that it is nowhere too big, and this separation will prevent an overbearing. There is no principle given, although there is perhaps something implied that you would not make the senate the commander in chief of the armies—how can you have a body of men, hundreds of men, and so on? Sure. But there is no principle stated. In Montesquieu, there is a principle stated: the sum total of political power must be divided into legislative, executive, and judiciary.

In Aristotle, you have a distinction of powers, no separation of powers. In Polybius, you have a separation of the sum total of power into more or less three equal parts without a principle. In Montesquieu, you have a separation into these three Aristotelian powers because there is a principle involved. Now what is that principle? Again, simple. Since the whole thing is stated for political purposes with sufficient clarity in books 11 and 12 and of *The Spirit of Laws*, the simple thing is[48] to read these two books; I believe that won't take more than half an hour for general familiarity. What is the key point? The security of the individual. Security of the individual exists if the legislator, the judge, and the executer are different individuals, different legal persons. The legislator may do his worst; I mean, he may have a very iniquitous law, but the executive has to have—in other words, he obeys the law, he does not necessarily add an animus of his own to the wickedness of the legislator. The same applies to the judge. The division of power is the only guarantee for the security of the individual.

Now in Polybius—Polybius thought of freedom in general. Surely there should be no oppression, but the precise notion of security of the individual is not the overriding concern of Polybius, as little as it is the overriding concern of Aristotle. Therefore Montesquieu's discussion of the division of powers, separation of powers, is linked up with a discussion especially of penal law, because the penal law affects the security of the individual to the extent to which he is menaced by the government to the highest degree. So the key point would then be the security of the individual as the overriding concern.

Then we take one further step: the primacy of the security of the individual. This has found a very precise expression in modern times with which you all are familiar, and that is the rights of man, the natural rights of each. Montesquieu is an extremely shrewd and broad thinker and he sees the problem inherent in that notion very well. I will only give you one indication, which is amusing but also instructive. He says that Sir William Petty—you know, in a way the founder of political economy—had figured out the value of the human being: being an economist everything has a value, even we too must have a value. And Montesquieu has no objection to that, except this: How did he figure out the value of a human being? He looked at what a human being was fetching at the slave market in Algiers. [Laughter] Very sad. To which Montesquieu,

that wise French magistrate replies: That may be the value of Englishmen [laughter], but there are countries in which a human being has a much smaller value; in some countries the value of a human being is even approaching zero, and in some countries [it] may be less than zero.[xx] He's thinking of very overpopulated countries who have now endemic famine.[49] Of course you can easily see how that affects the issue of the rights of man: What is the value of the right of life if life has no value? So in other words, he saw that the natural right doctrine as usually stated is open to all kinds of great difficulties. But still, nevertheless the natural right principles are the beginning, not the external but the inner beginning of this whole argument. So we have then that.

Then we would have to go into that question: What does natural right, what does this notion of natural right mean? What does it imply? And this notion of natural right as a right which is a legitimate *claim* of the individual—not a law, not duty—that is really a concept which is hardly older than Hobbes and clearly developed with awareness of the consequences only by Hobbes. Yes, but there is another notion, and that was the natural law or natural right in the sense in which the Greeks understood it. Surely we have to understand that first in order to see what such people like Hobbes and Locke did to it. You cannot understand Hobbes or Locke if you do not know (in the case of Locke every child knows that, I think, although not all scholars) that he[xxi] quotes Hooker, Richard Hooker, but he also modifies him without emphasizing this fact particularly. And therefore you have to understand Hooker, to read Hooker, to see what precisely Locke is trying to slip in. That is only one example from many that the basic modern concepts—by "basic" I mean not those which were basic in seventeenth century, but even those which are basic now—cannot be articulated, properly understood, unless we go back to the point where a direct analysis of political phenomena with full clarity about what one was doing, was done, and that means for practical purposes always Aristotle. Yes?

Student: Well, I would just like to add one footnote to what you're saying—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Beginning with legitimacy of this approach, it seems to me that the latest modern thought has been placed in one school—

LS: Yes . . .

Same Student: there has been a kind of return to Aristotle . . .

LS: No, I know of, I mean I may not know what you say but I have observed such things.

Student: Seems to me that for example in a book that's not here in the library yet, but it has just been published, a book on *The Politics of Developing Areas*,[xxii] I think it's called, in the introduction to this the man, in analyzing various political systems produces something that is very close to Aristotle when he says that the separation of powers, or as he calls them, functions, are these three: the rule-making, the rule-enforcing, the rule-adjudicating, which in a way returns

---

[xx] *The Spirit of Laws*, part 4, chapter 17.
[xxi] That is, Locke.
[xxii] Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman, *The Politics of Developing Areas* (1960).

to Aristotle's view of making the functions or powers distinct but not separate, see; he says that even in the American Constitution, the idea of separateness is illusory to some extent. So in this sense it seems to me that he is returning to a more . . . kind of notion which is very much like Aristotle and which is not like Polybius or Montesquieu or Locke.

LS: But still—that is, I believe you and I know similar things, but they are not quite the same as what I meant. What I meant could be compatible with a perfect rejection of the Aristotelian concepts, if I may say so (I exaggerate a bit), and using an entirely different scheme, provided [that] the scheme, or the fundamental concepts, or categories, or whatever you may call them have been clarified, you know, on the basis of such a starting from Aristotle. I see no other practical way to do that . . .so for many years. Now I suppose it is very late.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes. We omitted many, many important things; only one point which I would like to add as a transition to our further discussion: that I think Mr. Snowiss is right that that common regime, which is most commonly practicable is the polity, the polity, i.e., the polity being a kind of qualified democracy. Qualified democracy. I think that is correct. The difficulty is only this, that Aristotle found hardly any actual example of that. You remember. That question we have to discuss, because I think that was the true beginning of modern political philosophy: the observation that the best regime as Plato and Aristotle understood it, even in this very sober way in which it is meant here in the fourth book, is hardly ever actual. Perhaps it never has been actual. Does this not show that there is something wrong regarding the whole orientation of the classics? That was the step which Machiavelli took, which can be presented without any reference to nasty things and simply this consideration: If the whole political experience of mankind does not offer a single example of the best regime on whichever level you take it, how can you say the best regime is the regime according to nature? Which is a very attractive argument as far as it goes, and it goes very far, because you have to consider not only Machiavelli but also the men who improved on Machiavelli after him. The only justification for Plato and Aristotle which one can offer is this: did the abandonment of the idea of the best regime not lead political thought—[xxiii]

[xxiii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 11: no date
Regime change; revolution (book 5)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —extent of the difficulties, and I also like particularly what you said about making a distinction which is not made by Aristotle explicitly between the avoidable and unavoidable changes, and which[1] is connected with the question . . . which we discussed on a former occasion, whether prediction is possible or not.[i] You were aware of that. The approach of Aristotle is of course entirely different than the present-day approach. I will take this up later on. There is one point which you mention which seems to be understandable to begin with. Aristotle says that all believe in proportionate equality, and we have heard that in a democracy all believe in arithmetic equality. Now, how can you reconcile that?

Student: Well, in a democracy everybody believes that they *are* equal.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: So they should get an equal share . . .

LS: Is it proportionate?

Same Student: They're all equal, and they—

LS: If they all are simply equal . . . exchange to the other, then all should get the same shares . . . political power or what[ever] else. But chiefly political power. How can you reconcile that? Or is the principle of proportionate equality also recognized in democracy as Aristotle understood it? Yes?

Same Student: If you apply proportional equality to a group of equal people, then you will give them all equal rights, so that they are compatible if you assume that all the people are equal, then you can apply proportionate equality the same as numerical equality, if they're equal. But he never says that they are equal.

LS: Let us see where democracy as Aristotle understands it admits visibly proportionate equality, which is not identical with numerical equality when a difference appears; in that case a difference wouldn't appear, in the case mentioned by you. In that case, proportionate equality would coincide with numerical equality. Let us take simple cases. You must not forget that Aristotle's political teaching takes for granted private property and therefore also property owners: some have small property, some have large properties, some have no property. And there is also therefore exchange: shoemakers and farmers and what have you, or physicians. In all these cases, the people take for granted that there should be proportionate equality. For example, what a porter does, a man who only carries burdens and does nothing else, and a physician: that the physician should get

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read a the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

for his work more than the carrier of burdens, no one questions that. So we have a large sphere, although it may not be politically important, but still a large sphere in which everyone takes it for granted. Now furthermore, let look at the physicians themselves. From the point of view of proportionate equality, you could say that the first-rate physician should be rewarded differently than a bungler. But that doesn't work so easily, as we know, ya? So in other words, there we have to be satisfied with a rough kind of equality. As Aristotle puts it in this section [you read for][2] today, in a different context, the few are a *dēmos*, a society of equals amongst themselves . . . Now in which respect . . . turn it around [LS writes on the blackboard], the *dēmos* is also "a few," just as a few, these physicians, are in a way a *dēmos*, a collective of equals. The reverse is also true; how can you show that? In other words—yes?

Same Student: I was going to say that the *dēmos* are few in respect of their capacities, they are basically only one type of person, whether . . .

LS: No, I mean, which inequality is taken for granted by democracy as Aristotle understands it? Which politically? Now these inequalities of which I spoke hitherto, the economic inequalities, are not as such politically important, at least not those I mentioned. But which inequality is taken for granted by democracy?

Same Student: The natural inequality between slaves and free born.

LS: Ya, you don't have to say, don't have to add "natural." But nevertheless, it is good to do that because to the extent to which we can speak of a theory of ancient democracy, of which we have very little traces—there is a remark from somebody in the eighth book of Plato's *Republic* when he presents the democracy, and then the democrat says: No naturally free man would stand for any other regime except democracy. To that extent, you are right.[3] But turning to the simpler level, of course there are resident aliens, there are slaves, there are children, there are criminals of various degrees who are also unequal. So a certain inequality—if proportionate equality means some form of inequality, some form of inequality is built in in democracy as the classics understood it, I mean also [as] the peoples understood it. That should be clear.

Now the question then is more precisely this: Is the inequality regarding wealth, for example, politically as important as the rich say? That's the issue between the democrats and oligarchs. But that inequalities are politically important, and that the right order is one which makes proper allowance for the politically relevant inequalities, is admitted on all sides. This much on this point.

Now we—you said, and you have a perfect justification for that, as opposed to Barker[4]—and that is what you said at the beginning, the subject matter of the book is revolution. Since you are aware of it, you might be able to tell us what the embarrassing thing is in this respect.

Same Student: Revolution . . . tastes change or—

LS: You have only a very vague sense; that's all right. Now I don't think I can dispose of the vagueness; what one would have to do is really to make a formal study of the concept of revolution, which presupposes a study of the history of the term revolution; and every one of you is in a position to begin that study by looking at the *Oxford Dictionary*, the article "Revolution," where you will see quite a few things. But that is not[5] sufficient; one has also to go back to other points. Now I would like to make one remark. Aristotle uses two terms in this discussion. [LS writes on the blackboard.] One is *stasis*, the Greek word *stasis*, which I believe does not correspond with any English word. I would translate this by simply "rising," by rising, standing up, rising. That's one thing. Ya, my "s's" are not very good, but you got it, ya? Or shall I write it? [LS writes on the blackboard.] Rising. Now the other term is change of regime. The two things are not identical; there may be a rising, [but] not every rising leads to a change of regime. Aristotle gives some examples. There may be a rising—for example, what you have in Korea[ii] now might very well be directed only against Rhee's administration and not meant to be a change of the regime proper—an unpopular magistrate or general or what have you. On the other hand, not every change of regime comes about by a rising. Can you give us an example from Aristotle?

Same Student: The small . . .

LS: That led to a rising. But if you had for example a change, a slow change, so that the number, the proportion of the poor becomes much larger, and then at a certain moment on the basis of the established election laws, a change occurs. Yes? What is your point?

Student: . . .

LS: Ya. So not every change of regime comes about by rising; and yet there is some connection, obviously, and everyone senses that. Let us make it clear in the simplest way what the connection is—in the most superficial way, to begin with. Where do you see there is a connection? And that connection entitles the translators to speak of revolutions, because today we mean by a revolution—not universally, but ordinarily in political talk—a combination of a rising and a change of regime. Is that not true? The French revolution, the English revolutions, the Russian revolution, the American revolution—let's not forget that was also a rising and a change of regime, in spite of what some so-called conservative writers today assert who believe that the transformation of a monarchy into a republic and the abolition of any equivalent to a House of Lords properly so-called, a hereditary nobility, is trivial.

So what is the connection between the two, since they are manifestly different things? Well, shall I answer it? The biggest rising leads to a change of regime. You know, if there is only some minor change, someone is thrown out, some individual and nothing else is changed, that is not a big thing; but the biggest rising leads to a change of regime. And on the other hand, the biggest changes of regimes are brought about by risings. And that is

---

[ii] The presidential election in March 1960 in South Korea was rigged and the incumbent, Rhee, won by a landslide. This led to protests in Masan and later in Seoul, which came to be known as the April revolution. Martial law was imposed. Rhee resigned on April 26 and went into exile.

very vulgarly and popularly expressed, but sometimes it is good to do. The coincidence of the two we may compare to the violent death of a regime. A regime may also die without violence; it may simply decay, but the violent death is the most spectacular political happening and the most in size. Most in size. And therefore, so to say, when each of the two elements, the rising and the change of regime are in its fullest force, then we have that coincidence of both which is now meant by revolution. But revolution is not the term, is not a term which occurs in classical antiquity altogether. The . . . revolution originates, its primary meaning—I don't think the term revolution occurs in classical Latin at all, but it has a Greek equivalent, and in Greek the term occurs. That would be called [LS writes on the blackboard] *anacyclosis*. That would be, in Latin, *revolution*. Now that means turning around. Turning around. A revolution. The work of Copernicus has a title "On the Revolution of the Celestial Orbs." Revolution is this kind of thing—but it may also be elliptical, that doesn't make any difference; you come back to the same point. Polybius, you might have heard before, last time, in his account of the various regimes and how they change into one another, speaks of the revolution of the regimes, but he means by that not the change from one regime into another, but this movement: to begin, say, with kingship; that decays into tyranny. Then there comes aristocracy, then oligarchy. Then you have democracy; then you get mob rule; then you get tyranny. And then you begin to come again, in revulsion to tyranny, to kingship. That is the revolution according to Polybius. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Is there ever any concept of a linear change? I mean, starting from kingship going to tyranny and going back up the ladder from tyranny to kingship?

LS: Ya, but how do you come from—I mean, if you had this in a simple descending order [LS writes on the blackboard]: kingship, tyranny (or it may be complicated, but still); and then how do you get back except by . . . That is the scheme presented by Plato in the book, in the *Republic*, but that presupposes (but Plato doesn't say it) this movement[iii] back. And Plato speaks of a cycle in a different context in his dialogue *Statesman*, so I think that this was already the implication of Plato's teaching. Ya, but what is the difference? When we speak of revolutions today, we of course also have in mind successful risings which lead to a change of regime. But that is not quite what we mean by that, and therefore from our grandiose point of view the examples which Aristotle gives must seem very petty, very dry and boring enumerations of whether this thing, whether this regime was changed in this little way or in this big way and so. But we have to look at our concept of revolution: What is the basis, I mean, what is the empirical basis for our present-day concept of revolution?

Student: Well, I think that the modern sense of revolution, that also includes to a greater extent . . . change in society.

LS: Ya that is a part of surely the Marxist doctrine, but still precisely the Marxist doctrine makes also a distinction between political revolutions and social revolutions. [It] makes a distinction. And Aristotle is as such concerned here only with political

[iii] Strauss draws on the blackboard here.

revolutions as such, although he allows for the significance of so-called economic things. Yes?

Student: . . . ideology . . .

LS: Ya, I think that is crucial. You know we have these three great facts, the English revolutions—two of them, 1640 and 1688—the French revolution, and the Russian revolution. And the other ones are simply a kind of illustrations to these three. And our concept of revolution is abstracted from that modern experience. And here you have indeed a linear development. I mean, it becomes, according to the claims at any rate, ever more democratic—the claims, whatever they may be. Then you get into difficulties, and then there were so-called fascist revolutions in our century, but since they were obviously in the inverse direction, can they be called revolutions? That leads to certain difficulties, and that depends—if you make the distinction, you make a value judgment. And therefore you make a value judgment: there is a right kind of change; these are revolutions, the wrong kind are counterrevolutions or whatever have you. But then the question is: What about the standard? What about the standard? Furthermore, there is also implied a certain sense of direction of the whole movement, a kind of prediction regarding the future which is also implied which Aristotle also does not assume. Yes? Now—what?

Student: I'd like say that, I don't think always the concept of revolution necessarily implies a value judgment. Why doesn't he define . . . Say, radical and sudden change in a regime which brought about a radical and massive shift of power from one segment of the society to another, would this be a—

LS: In other words, you would always include the element of violence necessarily, ya?

Different Student: . . . get into an argument here over what constitutes a revolution. Might you say that the American revolution was a massive political change from one center of authority to another center of authority, but if you look at Burke's view on it, it was a natural thing, and in this sense wouldn't be considered a revolution.

LS: Yes, but Burke, you must not forget[6] [Burke's most famous statements on revolution were surely] about the French revolution. Especially in connection with the French revolution he made the great distinction between the revolution of 1789 following in France and that of 1688 to 89 in England.[iv] And this distinction was then applied to the difference between the American revolution and the French revolution. That Burke thought that the American colonists were fundamentally in the right against the stupidity of the British government, that does not in itself mean [7]that he denied it was a revolution: it was a justified revolution. Later on, in opposition to the French revolution he developed more of a doctrine regarding revolutions, and one could say perhaps this: defensible changes, sound changes, and indefensible and unsound changes. And from this point of view he put together 1688 and 1776; he did not speak of 1640 following. You know?[8] You must not forget that it is so much linked up with a discussion of that time that it

[iv] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

would not be immediately sufficient for building up a clear theory as to what constitutes revolution. But you also wanted to say something?

Student: Yes, one of my points has already been made. What I was going to say was that revolution, it seems to me, has two connotations . . . one, sudden change; two, violence. We have both of these things connected with the way we use revolution. However, we also use it in a more useful way to cover such things as industrial revolution—

LS: Sure, scientific revolution—

Same Student: Scientific revolution, all kinds of social revolutions, and things which are strictly political, like indigenous revolution, which we speak of the indigenous revolutions in underdeveloped countries, which aren't strictly speaking really very sudden or really very violent in many cases, so in this sense we've diluted the meaning a great deal from the original conception associated with . . .

LS: Ya, and our general inclination to like big words of this kind—other big words we dislike, like virtue, but this kind of words we like, that's quite true. But to come back to the main point which was indicated in the discussion, I think the characteristic difference between the modern concept of revolution and the Aristotelian concept is that the modern concept is connected with a philosophy of history. That I believe we would always be able to discern, not when we are confronted with an isolated definition, which may be wholly unrelated, but when we allow the man to have his full say on the matter. Aristotle's doctrine of revolution has nothing whatever to do with a philosophy of history. And[9] that is interesting enough, because he is somehow aware of the fact that there was very broadly speaking a development: early kingship, early nobility—aristocracy, the noble. Then you get a tyranny, and it was . . . in Athens. Then you had something like oligarchy slowly shifting into democracy and then decaying into, let us say dictatorship, Caesarism, or whatever we might call that . . . as the Roman experience, which Aristotle could not know. And something of this kind of course applies also to modern times, I mean the developments in the early middle ages very roughly speaking, so one could speculate on the basis of this: Is there not such a law of societies that, say, develop along the same track? Aristotle had sufficient material to develop that, but he didn't do that. At the end of the first book he has a criticism of Plato's simple scheme, and there he gives some of the reasons. We will discuss that next time.

But now I would limit myself to one point: What is the difference, the precise difference between Aristotle's approach and the modern approach? By modern approach I mean that which is characteristically modern; I do not deny that there are many in modern times who look also at changes of regimes and risings in this perspective. I would say this. Aristotle looks at such risings and changes [as] strictly political, in the way in which they come to sight to politically acting men as such.[10] For example, whatever Marxists or also non-Marxists might say about the tremendous differences between the present Russian regime and the Tsarist regime, there is a very important point which is of course identical, and that is security measures employed by Khrushchev or whoever is specially in charge of that, and by the ministers of the Tsars. The preservation of the regime—who

will win, whether they will preserve that regime, whether the regime will be destroyed—is impossible to predict. Or whether it will undergo slow changes which will bring about a different regime in the course of . . . is impossible to predict. We know that from today. No one would dare, no responsible man would dare to build his policy regarding Russia on the premise that this regime will have changed within fifty years into a so-called more liberalized version. I mean, you may hope that, you may account for that possibility, you may say we must act in such a way as not to prevent such a development, perhaps, but to take it as a basis would be a criminal folly. And so really no one knows. That is the situation with which we are politically concerned, that no one knows. And therefore the question arises from the point of view of every regime: How to preserve it? And what are the peculiar dangers to which this peculiar regime is exposed?

Now since there are other types of regime, meaning not only this country, but democratic regime, and this subdivision perhaps of democratic regime, to some extent you are able to generalize, and that is what Aristotle is doing here. One can also state the Aristotelian view popularly as follows: There is no revolution, there was no revolution, there will never be a revolution in which you can say the fate of mankind is at stake. He never says that, but that is a tacit implication. It is a much more practical and to some extent even technical problem than it is in light of the modern notions. One would doubtless have to go into that much more fully than we have done here. I mention one point, with reference to what Mr. Steintrager said. Now when Aristotle begins his discussion, he makes first a universal statement: *the* cause of risings is "quote justice unquote," by which he means, as would become clear from the context, what people believe to be just. Therefore we can say [that the cause is] certain opinions. Certain opinions.

Now Thomas Hobbes took up this issue many centuries later in his great works, and when he speaks of the things (I've forgotten now what the chapter headings are), the things which weaken a commonwealth or something of this kind in the *Leviathan* for example, [v] he puts the greatest emphasis on opinions. And he gives the list of opinions, ten or twelve, I don't know how many, which induce people, which weaken a commonwealth, which lead to a change to regime. You see, for Hobbes the opinions play a much greater role than for Aristotle, a much greater role. And that is the prehistory of what happened later, because if opinions are the danger, false opinions, [then] true opinions are the salvation; and therefore the chief political task is to instill the citizens with the right kind of opinions. Aristotle assumes tacitly, in some places we have seen it comes out explicitly, that opinions are by no means the only important point. I mean, many of the examples recorded by Miss O'Neill[vi] would show that, in case you haven't read them.

Now is there any point you would like to bring up regarding this very general problem, on which I can only touch here. The question of—I mean, revolution is one of these key concepts of social science in which all of the problems are buried if one does not begin to think about it. Yes?

---

[v] *Leviathan*, chapter 29: "Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the Dissolution of a Commonwealth."

[vi] Apparently a reference to a student who presented a paper in the class.

Student: . . . relationship in Aristotle between revolution and economic disagreement are involved, and . . . Marx . . .

LS: Yes, what does this mean, economic? Aristotle speaks of that, but he uses a different name for that. He uses a different name—I mean, that Aristotle knew that the difference between the rich and the poor is of the utmost importance, I think that we have seen that often enough. The question is only, from the Marxist point of view: What's wrong with that?[11] Why would Marx say that this is an inadequate analysis, it is[12] much too rough? Yes?

Same Student: Well, Aristotle doesn't see a tension here which will inevitably bring about a revolution.

LS: No, Aristotle regards it as possible, as a modern bourgeois would, that the two parts can live in harmony. If the rich are sensible people and the poor are also tolerably sensible, then they can live in harmony. That is what Aristotle surely believed. Even today, some of the passages which Miss O'Neill mentioned show this simple-minded view. And he of course doesn't say that they must live in harmony; that will not come about automatically. I mean, if there is no effort, if not the proper effort is made on both sides, it won't work. The proper effort can be facilitated by common dangers, for example, which is not something nice (dangers are not nice), but which can be very helpful, salutary. But the main point is that Marx would simply say: What kind of rich? The feudal lords were rich. The big industrialists or bankers in the bourgeois society are rich: that is an entirely different kind of wealth and therefore will also have an entirely different kind of poverty at the opposite pole, and therefore the fate of these societies will be entirely different. The feudal opposition of rich and poor allowed for the possibility of a class emerging which could become again a ruling class. You know the famous story, the serfs running away from their lords into cities, towns, and becoming free men there, becoming burghers, and that is the origin of the bourgeoisie. And at a certain moment, this new class, originally simply a part, a fragment of the poor, became the rich—a new kind of rich—and the rulers. But in the last case, in the case of the bourgeois, a class, the poor, are a class which can never wish to become a ruling class proper, a ruling class presupposing of course always a ruled class.

So in other words, the question is however whether Aristotle is really—apart from the Marxist hopes and expectations—is speaking merely analytically, whether Aristotle does not make these distinctions. You remember in the case of the *dēmos*, he does make the distinctions between whether the *dēmos* consists chiefly of peasants or chiefly of urban people or of what kind. For example,[13] the poorest parts of a commonwealth may be numerically very strong. I mean, say, the people, the unskilled workers without any landed property, may become numerically very strong: that is what Aristotle calls extreme democracy. That would give the democracy an entirely different complexion. Up to this point, Aristotle is precise enough; he was perhaps not precise enough in his distinctions of the various kinds of wealthy people, although he refers to that when he speaks of the difference between Sparta, a surely noncommercial city, and Carthage, a

surely commercial city. But still, these refinements, which are necessary from Aristotle's own point of view, are for this very reason not in contradiction with his point of view. In other words, Aristotle's *polis* is perfectly compatible with a greater breakdown of the various kinds of rule of the rich than he has given. It would be an interesting question why he did not take the trouble, whereas he did take the trouble in the case of democracy. That would be an interesting question. There is no difficulty in principle, I believe. Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Do I understand the difference between . . . between Aristotle and Mr. Dennison?

LS: There is no difference.

Mr. Faulkner: But I thought you said appearances . . .

LS: Yes, all right.

Mr. Faulkner: Do I understand the difference between Aristotle and Mr. Dennison[vii] . . .

LS: Mr. Freud would make a lot of that. [Laughter]

Student: . . . Do I understand the differences between Aristotle . . . that Aristotle's criterion for revolution is a quality of change and Dennison's is a quantitative, a sudden and violent, sudden and violent change—

LS: No, I don't think so. What would you say is the difference?

Same Student:[viii] Well, I don't really know how to meet this objection because I hadn't thought of it in this way. It seems to me that by violence . . . became a qualitative, and suddenness . . .

LS: Yes, sure and suddenness also—

Same Student: And suddenness—

LS: Yes, at least qualitative, quantity—

Same Student: I mean, it doesn't seem to me, I don't see what you mean by casting it in this way, maybe . . .

LS: No, but you had something—still, there was a difference, and it would be useful if you would bring it out in a very general way. What do you think is, how should I say, either too little or too much in Aristotle's overall notion?

[vii] An auditor in the class (his name is not on the class register).
[viii] Presumably Mr. Dennison.

Same Student: What do I think is too little or too much?

LS: Ya.

Same Student: Well, it seems to me . . . kind of evolutionary, evolutionary revolution in a sense, that is, changes are gradual and still revolutionary—

LS: [14]That is a very important problem. What you have in mind is a rising[15] leading up to a change of the regime. And Aristotle of course is very much concerned with that, but Aristotle says—as you, I trust, would admit—there may be risings of a very limited kind, just to get rid of one individual; and then on the other hand there may be changes of regime which are not violent. Ya?

Same Student: Right.

LS: Take, for example, the monarchy. The last heir dies. Technically, some foreign prince would be an heir, but the people feel we'd rather get along without monarchy than to have a foreign prince; and then they decide peacefully: Let us have now a council of the greatest men of the commonwealth instead of the king. No violence whatever. It would become then a somewhat verbal question, which is avoided by Aristotle's terminology, that he does not speak of revolution.

Same Student: Well, there was one thing, it seems to me that Aristotle doesn't really take account of or at least underrates the possibility of revolution . . . externally, that is either through war, or—

LS: Oh, he speaks of it—

Same Student: I know, I think he underrates it, at least.

LS: No, no, he could not, because that was a common fact during the Peloponnesian war especially, that wherever the Athenians were strong, they established democracies, and wherever the Spartans were strong, they established oligarchies. He refers to that. No, he could not have overlooked that. Yes?

Student: But perhaps the point is that he doesn't make clear why there should be this impetus. I mean, Aristotle's quite clear that tyranny—let's say a democracy and an oligarchy cannot live side by side; in other words, there's no peaceful coexistence for Aristotle. There is almost a necessity which would lead them to clash and . . . oppose its principle on the other.

LS: But yes,[16] in one sense he says much more: they are as incompatible as that the same man has and does not have cancer. If you have a democracy somewhere, you can't have a tyranny at the same place and at the same time; that's impossible. But that there should be a tyranny in city A and a democracy in city B, he takes for granted [that] this can be

done. I mean, he doesn't say a word that the duty of democracy is to establish democracies everywhere.

Student: But does he say—

LS: He may say that it might be a wise policy; he may have thought so, but we have no evidence for that. No. That is really not an issue. In other words, the domestic problems—one of the regime, may be based on foreign policy considerations or may issue in those considerations, and they may not. It all depends. He doesn't make any statement of that.

Student: Well, it seems to me that later in the fifth book he states emphatically that it is obvious that constitutions with opposite principles will clash. I mean, two opposed polises, poli, or whatever—

LS: *Poleis*, *poleis*. Say "cities." [Laughter]

Student: All right, two cities, let's say, side by side are going—if you can look at one and say that its regime is that of oligarchy and look at another and say its regime is that of a tyranny, you can then say there will be war between these two—

LS: I mean, I don't remember that passage. I have not read the last part now, but I doubt very much whether Aristotle says such a thing in universality. What he does say is that tyrants are compelled to engage in an expansionist foreign policy in order to take off the steam at home; that's another matter. But regarding democracy or the other regimes, he does not say whether they are constitutionally compelled either to be aggressive or non-aggressive in the foreign field. That depends on circumstances. The ordinary view in classical times was that the democracy of the type of Athens is inevitably aggressive. Aristotle does not say so. You know, think of the expansionist—Athens for very simple reasons, these payments for attendance at the law courts and so [on] came from the Athenian empire so they had to keep it, and if possible enlarge it. But that leads us away from the fundamental issue. Now we have to turn now to the text—but Mr. Reinken, I forgot you.

Mr. Reinken: Well, it was only a side point. Miss O'Neill mentioned the movement from mercenary armies to demagogues, and it struck me that this has gone on much further since Aristotle's time, and perhaps Cromwell's New Model Army[ix] is the turning point, but beyond it when the armies are not attached personally as they were to Caesar or Caligula, but as with Castro[x] they are drawn partly to the man but principally to ideology . . .

LS: Yes, that is, this kind—let me put it this way, and I think we will find some evidence for that. The "idealist," the man dedicated to a cause (with whom we are so familiar in all

---

[ix] The New Model Army was a professional army created in 1645 during the English Civil War in order to better oppose the King's army. Oliver Cromwell was in charge of the cavalry.

[x] Fidel Castro, a Cuban communist revolutionary who governed Cuba from 1956 to 2008.

countries, at least in all Western countries but I suppose in others), that was for classical thought a very great problem. A very great problem. And you can say that such a work like Plato's *Republic* is nothing except an analysis of political idealism. That was a very strange—I mean, the just man they knew; the lawabiding man, the just man, that they knew; but the political idealist as we call it is a very great problem. What Plato does in his *Republic*, there Socrates is confronted with two young political idealists, as we would call them in our language, Glaucon and Adeimantus, believers in justice in such a way that they want to remodel the city according to justice. We know something of what happened: there were quite a few young boys, youngsters of this kind who loathed the Athenian democracy as a disgrace, and out of idealism, as we would say, they tried to restore that. Plato, when he was twenty, had similar feelings. And then a revolution took place, the famous thirty tyrants, and then Plato says—you can read it the Seventh Letter—when he looked back from then to that terrible democracy, that terrible democracy looked in retrospect like the golden age. So Plato was cured when he was twenty or so; and Glaucon and Adeimantus are cured in the *Republic* in our sight so we can observe the process. Socrates makes every allowance—in his critique of democracy in the eighth book he states the case against democracy in absolutely fantastic way, you remember the story that the very donkeys don't obey any more in a democracy. But in this process, they are led to see the full problem of "quote political idealism." We have some trace of that here.

Now[17] one would have to understand this strange thing which many people today say is simply a secularized version of religious feelings of mission, expansion and so—secularization as they say. But that is also a word which would need a long commentary and a long analysis to become intelligible. Now let us read at the end of 1301a, where he says "People arise out of emotions of justice but most justly of all." Mr. Reinken, ya?

Mr. Reinken: At the beginning of the book?

LS: No, no. 1300a, 1301a end: "But most justly of all would rise those who are outstanding as regards virtue." The end of 1301a.

Mr. Reinken: I've forgotten . . .

LS: I'm sorry. Well, all right. Let me try to do that until you find it.

Most justly of all would those rise who are outstanding in regard to virtue, but these men do it least of all. They have the greatest justification because almost everywhere those who are not truly virtuous are in control. And they should rule, according to natural right. But these men who have the greatest right, avail themselves least of that right.[xi]

And now he gives the reason why. "For"—do you have it now?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

[xi] Strauss's translation.

There is also some justification for those who, possessing an advantage of birth— (1301b2-3)

LS: No, no, before. "For it is most reasonable."

Mr. Reinken:
for they—and they only—can reasonably be regarded as enjoying an absolutely superiority. (1301b1-2)

LS: Ya. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
There is also some justification for those who, possessing an advantage of birth— (1301b2-3)

LS: No. That he doesn't say. "There are some who being superior by descent are not satisfied with equality because of that inequality," namely, the inequality regarding virtue. "For men of noble birth are thought to be those who possess virtue of the ancestors and wealth." The implication is that the men of noble birth, they fight for rule and make risings. They do not have the justification because their forefathers might have been men of virtue, but whether they are men of virtue is an open question. Now why do the men of virtue, in contradistinction to the idealists, not make risings? Let us read that; take this up first. In 1304a, end.

Mr. Reinken: End?
Revolutions also occur when the sections of the state which are usually regarded as antagonists—for example the rich and the common people—are equally balanced with little or nothing of a middle class to turn the scale— (1304a39–b2)

LS: Ya. In other words, an equilibrium, a so-called equilibrium, necessarily needs to clash. Ya? There must be some cushion between them, the middle class. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
for where either side has a clear preponderance, the other will be unwilling to risk a struggle with the side— (1304b2-3)

LS: No, I must have made a mistake.

Mr. Reinken:
This is the reason why— (1304b4)

LS: No, no, that's not the one. No, no, go on, this is the right passage.

Mr. Reinken:
This is the reason why men of pre-eminent merit do not, as a rule, attempt to stir up sedition: they are only a few against many. (1304b4-6)

LS: So that seems to be a perfectly good reason, ya? Being men of virtue, they are men of sense; and therefore they know quite well that they couldn't win except with the help of people without sense. And then there would be a mess of a different complexion, but still a mess. Now go on, because the other point is relevant also.

Mr. Reinken:
Such, on a general view, are the springs and causes of sedition and change in all constitutions. We may add that political revolutions are sometimes achieved by force, and sometimes by fraud. Force may either be used initially or at a later stage. Fraud, too, may be used at two different stages. Sometimes it is used in the the initial stage. In this way a change may be made at the moment with general assent; but those who have made it then proceed to keep control of affairs in the teeth of all opposition. This was the case with the revolution of the Four Hundred at Athens: they first defrauded the people by an assurance that the Persian King would provide money for the war against Sparta, and after this act of fraud they attempted to keep the constitution permanently under their control. Sometimes, however, an initial act of persuasion is followed up afterwards by a similar policy, and control is thus kept with general consent. (1304b6-17)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. So in other words, what I suggest is this. One could perhaps also consider this as an additional reason, which however, Aristotle characteristically does not give as a reason: that men of virtue would not use force or fraud; and therefore two major means of affecting a change of regime are not at their disposal. But it is very characteristic that Aristotle does not say that.

Now let us return to 1301b, and a few points only. Aristotle makes first a distinction in his usual way between various kinds of changes; there may be a rising which is political, meaning a change in regime is intended, or only where a change of personnel is intended. For example, if you look at the difference between Malenkov and Lenin,[xii] you have a clear difference, although one could perhaps say that Malenkov also stood for a different policy and not only for his own power. You don't know. Then another kind of change which is not radical is if it is only a question of more less democratic. Say, if you have a change in an American state from strictly representative democracy to a somewhat more direct democracy, that would be an example; and vice versa of course, too. Then there may be changes directed not against a regime but only against a certain office, which is low. But then after this first initial distinction, Aristotle turns to general discussion of such changes of regime. And the first thing he has to do since he spoke of the just, as a notion of just as the guiding motive, then he has to explain that. Miss O'Neill stated that clearly enough; we do not have to stop at that. We turn now to 1302a16. That may very well be the beginning of a chapter in Barker. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: He says:

[xii] Georgy Malenkov (1902-1988) succeeded Stalin as premier and first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953, a position he held until 1955. Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) was a Russian revolutionary who was the first leader of the Soviet Union, from its inception in 1917 to his death in 1924.

Since we have to consider the various reasons which lead to the rise of seditions and changes in the general run of constitutions, we had better begin with a general view of their origins and causes. They may be said to be three in number; and we must begin by giving a brief outline of each of them separately. The three things we have to investigate are (1) the state of mind which leads to sedition; (2) the objects which are at stake; and (3) the occasions which serve to start political disturbance and mutual dissension. (1302a16-22)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here first. In other words, three things have to be distinguished. What state of mind—but the word "mind" does not occur in the Greek, and you could also say what "mood."[18] I don't know how to translate that, *pōs echontes*. Is there anyone who knows Greek? How? It is a very general word.

Student: . . .

LS: Ya, but that would also put the emphasis on the mental things in particular, you know? That is not—

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, something of this kind. Something of this kind. And the second is—that must more literally be translated: "For the sake of what. And the third: Which are the origins, the initiating origins, of political confusions and of risings of one against the other."[xiii] Aristotle refers here, that is not difficult to see, to different kinds of causes. You may recall that Aristotle distinguished various kinds of causes. The simple example, the shoemaker making a shoe. There is in the first place necessarily the material, say, leather. That's the material cause. Then there is necessarily the maker, in this case, the shoemaker: the maker, or that which begins the motion, which begins the change; the origin of the change is in the shoemaker. And then there must be some vision of the thing to be produced; that's the form. He must have this form in his mind. And fourth, there must be a purpose of this thing to be produced, and that is the end, the end or the final cause.

Now Aristotle here speaks of only three of these causes, omitting the material cause because that is not interesting here; that would be man in general, and would be of no interest. Now let's take first the first point.

Mr. Reinken:
The principal and general cause of an attitude of mind which disposes men towards change is the cause of which we have just spoken. There are some who stir up sedition because their minds are filled by a passion for equality, which arises from their thinking that they have the worst of the bargain in spite of being the equals of those who have got the advantage. There are others who do it because their minds are filled with a passion for inequality (that is, superiority), which arises from their conceiving that they get no advantage over others (but only an equal amount, or even a smaller amount) although

[xiii] Strauss retranslates part of the last passage read above.

they are really more than equal to others. (Either of these passions may have some justification; and either may be without any.) Thus inferiors become revolutionaries in order to be equals and equals in order to be superiors. This is the state of mind which creates sedition. (1302a23-32)

LS: So in other words, the state of mind is an opinion regarding justice, backed up by zeal, let us say. The word passion never occurs here, but something of this kind is of course present. That is the form, the formal cause, that which characterizes the revolutionary, as we would say. The revolutionary is a man who is filled with a certain notion of injustice or justice that gives him his character. But this doesn't tell us for the sake of what he is doing it; nor does he tell us what the beginning of the motion is, the beginning of the change is. These things come up later. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
The objects which are at stake are profit and honor. They are also their opposites—loss and disgrace; for the authors of political sedition may be simply seeking to avert some disgrace, or a fine, from themselves or their friends. (1302a33-34)

LS: Ya. The end for the sake of which is honor and gain. Aristotle of course doesn't mean that they must both be present. Honor and/or gain, that is for the sake of which these people, characterized by a certain notion of justice and by a dedication to that, act. Now what is the beginning of the motion? These men have this end, and they have a certain character; what is the beginning of the action? What is the beginning of the change? Is this not enough for answering the question of the beginning of the change? Well?

Student: To meet the occasion?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: To meet the occasion.

LS: Occasion. Well, I just wanted to remind you of the famous distinction between motive and opportunity. You know a man may have a motive for committing a murder and yet lacking opportunity, and then he would be an extreme fool if he would commit a murder. But the other thing is needed, what is the beginning of his action is the opportunity, the occasion. Ya, but that is of course—that is only in order to make it initially intelligible. The passage is very difficult. Let us now turn to the sequel and read this with particular care.

Mr. Reinken:
The occasions— (1302a35)

LS: No, no, "the *causes* and initiating beginnings of the motions."

Mr. Reinken:

the causes— (1302a35)

LS: They are technical Aristotelian terms which are used, you know *aitiai*, and *aitia, archē tēs kinēseōs* and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The causes and origins—causes which encourage the attitude of mind, and lead to the pursuit of the objects, which have just been mentioned—may be counted, from one point of view, as seven, but from another as more than that number. Two of these causes (profit and honour) are identical with two of the objects which have just been mentioned; but when considered as causes they act in a different way. As objects, profit and honour provoke dissension because (as we have just noted) men want to get them themselves: as causes, they lead to dissension because men see other persons getting a larger share—some justly and some unjustly—than they themselves get.[xiv] (1302a35-1302b2)

LS: Ya, now let us see. Do you understand that?[19] I mean, all these revolutionaries do what they do for the sake of honor and/or gain. Honor does not mean of course in Aristotle what they now call power, by which I mean that honor doesn't mean to have a badge, you know, and this kind of thing, and that people talk about them; that is not a concern of serious men. On the other hand, Aristotle does not speak of power in the way in which it is done now because, for example, you can have power by being the wirepuller. No one knows of you, and you, in some smoke-filled room, only with one other fellow who is your front man, you pull all wires. That is, honor means of course recognition. Recognition. And we have a good example in our age of this old political motive in the figure of Winston Churchill, where I think the term honor in that full sense, where it shifts insensibly into glory, is much more visibly a motive than power in our sense. The word power comes into the foreground only in Hobbes;[20] the earlier writers always speak on such occasions of honor and glory, and that has very much to do with a kind of prose which has become characteristic of modern thought. Power seems to be much more businesslike. You need power, smaller or lesser power, for mere survival. Honor or glory are not in that sense necessary for mere living, they have a different status. At any rate, these motives are then there, but let us limit ourselves to the motive of honor. All revolutionaries act for the sake of honor, in order to acquire honor. But now honor is said to also be the origin of the motion, of the revolutionary motion. How can this be understood?

Mr. Reinken: Look, there's a presidency in operation, and Kennedy[xv] is impelled to seek that honor. But a man might—

LS: You don't say that he is a potential revolutionary? Are you so much opposed to him to say that? [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: No. Or somebody . . . a king, prime minister . . . it's revolutionary. He tried to get the crown of Richard II and in this sense—

[xiv] Mr. Reinken substitutes "causes" for "occasions" in the passage.
[xv] John F. Kennedy won the presidential election in November 1960.

LS: Richard III.

Mr. Reinken: It is both object and cause. But in an equal society of . . . one of them conceives of the idea, "if only I could make these fellows a name." It's not a cause; he hasn't been provoked by the sight of honors; it's his object . . .

LS: I see. In other words, what you would suggest is this: a man may have this desire for honor, but this desire would remain dormant without the occasion. The occasion is what appears to him and others a maldistribution of honors. Is that what you mean? So that honor in the form of maldistribution of honors is the occasion, whereas honor is the end. Ya? I mean, he would desire honor regardless of the maldistribution of honors, but he has no chance of success if there is not some maldistribution of honors, at least one which he believes to exist, in order to get started. Is that what you meant?

Mr. Reinken: No. But—

LS: No?

Mr. Reinken: This brings me closer to bringing out the distinction between—

LS: I see, I thought you meant that—

Mr. Reinken: His view and that which provokes him—

LS: Ya, all right, but then—

Mr. Reinken: . . . creates envy.

LS: Ya, he doesn't call it—

Mr. Reinken: . . . envy is a cause.

LS: Ya, but in this case Aristotle does not mean envy. It is what is in his mind; Aristotle doesn't make psychoanalysis. What is in the mind of the man is the awareness, the opinion that honors are maldistributed. And if this opinion is shared by others (otherwise it would be hopeless) that gives him an opportunity to begin. But that for the sake of which he is engaging in this dangerous enterprise is honor. Ya?

Mr. Reinken: . . .

LS: Yes?

Student: I am a little bit confused about what we are talking about. Are you saying that honor is being used . . . in the way we use power, in this context?

LS: Yes. Well, what I mean—

Same Student: We use power in two ways. We use it as a quality of a status or a position, and also we use it as a means by which we do certain things, that is, more like a physical sense of power, and energy. And it seems to me that we mean power, and mean it in the first sense . . . quality of an office . . . or—

LS: No, then we would have to go more into a—there is also the meaning of legal power, which doesn't have any of the connotations which you mean. But what I thought of was simply when you speak of a power-hungry man: he wants to acquire power. You know? Power[21] is an object of desire. Is this not frequently used today in this sense?

Same Student: Right, but you don't know which one he refers to. You might be talking about something you can more or less make equivalent, or based on the same level, that is wealth and prestige. That is, the office might have wealth . . . and with prestige you might have power.

LS: Ya, but still, power in itself means the ability to hurt and to help. Is that what is meant by it?

Same Student: Well, that's one thing, yes.

LS: Ya, but it is interesting; the Greeks were familiar with that, the expression occurs very frequently, that is not such a primary, such a thing as they referred to easily as a great motive of politically active men. Let's say, call [it] honor—I mean honor not in the sense in which we speak of a man of honor, that means something else. But therefore, say, "honor-glory," ya? A resplendence. Power may seem to be something very solid; but if there is such resplendence—I try to express it in sensual terms, how it appears to the senses. Now, and I think that in itself is a very interesting point, that the word honor-glory has almost disappeared from our political vocabulary. Churchill is a remarkable exception, but he was, as Laski put it, an anachronism.[xvi] And that is one sign of the anachronistic character of Churchill, whereas power comes to us naturally—I mean of course power, and that is a long question, because of the old ambiguities of power, corresponding to the Latin *potestas,* which means official legal power, and *potentia*, which means, so to say, the physical power.

Student: I think we use prestige.

LS: Yes, but "prestige" has of course always a derogatory meaning, I mean, whatever the social scientists may say. If you say a man is concerned with prestige, you say something very bad about him, but if you say he is concerned with honor and glory, you do not necessarily say something bad about him. These things you cannot get rid [of] by the process of methodical purification—or sterilization [laughter], as would be a better expression.

[xvi] Harold Laski, "Winston Churchill in War and Peace," reprinted in *The Nation*, June 25, 2009 at https://www.thenation.com/article/winston-churchill-war-and-peace/

Then Aristotle gives some other motives. I mean, it is clear what gain means. Gain means of course greater wealth. And honor means insolence also; but insolence acts as a motive in which way? Meaning the insolence of those who rule; people do not start revolutions out of insolence, generally speaking, but they are induced to start a rising by insolence shown by the rulers: fear, superiority, contempt, and so on and so on. We don't have to go into that.

Another point. Then Aristotle mentions some things which have nothing to do with the previous conversation—that was question raised by Miss O'Neill at the end of her paper.[22] Is some sort of justice or injustice in the minds of the revolutionaries, as we would say, essential according to Aristotle? That was your question. Now let us take this—in the other cases it is rather clear. For example, if we take the case of the fear of these people who fear: one could at least argue that the people who fear to be condemned have some notion that they ought not to be condemned. In other words, that they are of the opinion that even if they are legally condemned to death, the law is wrong. But let us take another case, which seems to be entirely outside of the sphere of morality, in 1303a25.[23] Ya, all right, read this, about—

Mr. Reinken: "Heterogeneity of stock?" 1303a25

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:
Heterogeneity of stocks may lead to sedition—at any rate until they have had time to assimilate. A state cannot be constituted from any chance body of persons, or in any chance period of time. Most of the states which have admitted persons of another stock, either at the time of their foundation or later, have been troubled by sedition. There are many instances. (1303a25-29)

LS: Ya . . . only later on after he mentions the Sybarites, he says—

Mr. Reinken:
At Byzantium— (1303a34)

LS: No, no, before.

Mr. Reinken:
At Thurii the Sybarites quarreled with the other settlers who had joined them in its colonization; and demanding special privileges, on the ground that they were the owners of the territory, they were driven out of the colony. (1303a32-34)

LS: You see, here the claim would of course present itself as a just claim. And I think you can also see it just by looking around, that in all cases where differences of stock or any other differences come in, these differences present themselves as reasons for rightful superiority of one part to the other. That simply enters. Very few people are so cynical as

to say: I don't have the slightest shadow of right, and yet I wonder if this and this, say, discriminatory measure. They will always adduce, try to adduce reasons, and quite a few necessarily believe in the truth of it. I mean, that is partly a very sad story, but that is an important fact. Without this notion, it doesn't work. The whole element of indignation which enters is inseparable from some notions of right. We deserve to be treated differently or better; you deserve to be treated worse. That enters, necessarily. I think to that extent the notion of justice comes in. Whether it is true in all cases remains to be seen. Now later on, a bit later, in b12, after he has given the example of Athens and the Piraeus. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
Taking our analogy from war, where the dividing line of a ditch, however small it may be, makes a regiment scatter in crossing, we may say that every difference is apt to create a division. The greatest division is perhaps that between virtue and vice; then there is the division between wealth and poverty; and there are also other divisions, some greater and some smaller, arising from other differences. (1303b13-18)

LS: Ya. In other words, there are differences among human beings, necessarily.[24] Not all differences have this character; for example, the difference between men and women does not ordinarily lead to a league of men . . . a league of women. But the politically interesting differences are those which potentially generate hatred. There is a word of Balzac: "Difference engenders hatred."[xvii] Only this difference . . . is meant here by Aristotle. Yes, but hatred has in itself nothing to do with right and wrong, with the sense of right and wrong. But it becomes politically effective, that is what Aristotle means, only when it undergoes this modification by virtue of which the hatred appears as rightful hatred. Not in all cases; there are so-called cynics who are no way affected by that. But this is not the typical case of what we may call a revolutionary. Now of which case did you think, Miss O'Neill, in particular, where it is one doesn't see any element, notion of right and wrong, however wrong the notion may be?

Miss O'Neill: . . .

LS: . . . You had the story of this one about the heiress? And what was this? Do you remember it? He wanted—the bridegroom wanted to fetch the bride, and they didn't give it to him. And he was terribly insulted. But to feel insulted means to feel that a wrong has been done. You see in Plato's *Republic* the division of the parts of the soul into three: the first, that is called reason or calculation; the lowest he calls desire; and the central one he calls, in the usual English translation, spirit. The Greek word is *thumos.* [LS writes on the blackboard.] *Thumos.* Now this spiritedness, that is a very complex phenomenon, and one very powerful indication of it, one very common indication of it is anger. Anger. Now in anger according to Aristotle there is always a notion, in the case of man at any rate, of injustice. Take the simple case: you hurt yourself at this chair or table and you hit back. What is implied? The chair should not have done that. And still more so in the case of anger toward human beings. So this middle thing is a very complex phenomenon, which Plato[25] calls spiritedness, has this in itself. And one could also put it this way. In order

[xvii] Not Balzac, but the narrator of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, chapter 27.

that there be a revolution or a rising, there has to be some anger. If people are just easygoing—or maybe suffering; people can suffer and yet be easygoing, but if they do not acquire anger, develop anger against fellow citizens . . . Now but in this very anger, some notion of being dealt with unjustly is implied and ordinarily will become explicit. In the political discussions, when they argue it out before it comes to the fighting, they will of course speak of right and wrong all the time. And that is never, or hardly ever mere cynicism. To that extent, I believe it would go through. For example, take the example of the city consisting of two geographically somewhat different parts.[26] Well, if the two parts of the city, the one on the right bank of the river, the other on the left bank find it very inconvenient, this arrangement, and think it is much better for each to form a city by itself, there wouldn't be any rising. There would be an amiable agreement that they form independent cities and they have to take care of their common business, debts or what have you . . . There would be no rising. When the violence occurs—so that the violence could happen, there would have to be some opposition to that proposal or some opposition to the specific terms of the proposal, say, that the people of the right bank who say: No, the debts must be paid by the old city; on the left, this one.[xviii] That is what I think Aristotle means.

Ya, now this point that was brought up in a certain connection, regarding when Aristotle makes a remark about the destruction of democracies by demagogues. He inserts a reflection on the difference between the present-day demagogues and the demagogues of the past. In the past, the demagogues became tyrants. Today, meaning in Aristotle's time, they do no longer become tyrants, and that has something to do with the fact that in the olden times no one could acquire political leadership if he was not at the same time a military leader and therefore a man capable to lead armed men, and that was it. Today they are no longer capable to do that, and the typical weapon of the demagogue is not arms but speech. Some one of you had a certain difficulty here, no? Is this not intelligible? Aristotle makes a qualification, by the way, he says "very rarely," because in the case of Cleon in the Peloponnesian war, you had someone, Cleon, who in a very surprising way, proved to be militarily successful,[xix] as though perhaps by some plagiarism from some military men . . . I don't believe that this rises to the question of principle. So.[xx]

---

[1] Deleted "ya, he says"
[2] Deleted "you said something"
[3] Deleted "you know"
[4] Deleted "but the question is what, I mean"
[5] Deleted "so there's"
[6] Deleted "because"
[7] Deleted "on the other hand, you also"
[8] Deleted "You could have"
[9] Deleted "On the one hand, there is a consideration that"
[10] Deleted "not"
[11] Deleted "which I think"
[12] Deleted "therefore that doesn't make such a"

[xviii] Strauss evidently gestures to something written on the board.
[xix] Especially at Pylos. See Thucydides's *History*, book 4.
[xx] The tape ends at this point.

[13] Deleted “you have to make”
[14] Deleted “and what about”
[15] Deleted “indicated”
[16] Deleted “now”
[17] Deleted “of that”
[18] Deleted “Aristotle makes, he says—but why, it”
[19] Deleted “if you”
[20] Deleted “now what, I mean”
[21] Deleted “what”
[22] Deleted “it establishes”
[23] Deleted “had always no”
[24] Deleted “and so that”
[25] Deleted “that would”
[26] Deleted “in the”
[27] Deleted “people who—you can put, if you want to use that”
[28] Deleted “you know”
[29] Deleted “which is sometimes”
[30] Deleted “he”
[31] Deleted “that is the real, I mean”
[32] Deleted “you have”
[33] Deleted “so that requires”
[34] Deleted “would lead to”
[35] Deleted “say, they”
[36] Deleted “I would also”
[37] Deleted “the concept of”
[38] Deleted “I mean”
[39] Deleted “and in”
[40] Deleted “Generally”
[41] Deleted “but this, you see—well, I know that, but you must not forget”
[42] Deleted “in a very”
[43] Deleted “let us”
[44] Deleted “but what”
[45] Deleted “that creates”
[46] Deleted “I mean”
[47] Deleted “England, king—no Rome”
[48] Deleted “to do with these two books”
[49] Deleted “now of that”

Session 11
[1] Deleted “implies of course it”
[2] Deleted “of”
[3] Deleted “so in other words”
[4] Deleted “here is another chair if you want to sit, I don’t know your name. Here is another chair. No, then? You are not responsible for that.”
[5] Deleted “only”
[6] Changed from “Burke wrote—his first statements on revolution were surely—I mean the most famous—”
[7] Deleted “that he didn’t say it was”
[8] Deleted “and that is, and”
[9] Deleted “that is not”
[10] Deleted “And there”
[11] Deleted “what would”
[12] Deleted “too”
[13] Deleted “there may be”
[14] Deleted “No, I think really, let me try to—I don’t believe that—this is a very important problem.”
[15] Deleted “connected”
[16] Deleted “where does”

[17] Deleted “I suggest that we—was this your?— I mean,”
[18] Deleted “you don’t have the—in what”
[19] Deleted “Do you—I think that is, do you understand that?”
[20] Deleted “not in the earlier”
[21] Deleted “is something”
[22] Deleted “Is the motive of, I mean”
[23] Deleted “Do you have the time? [Inaudible]”
[24] Deleted “now the differences”
[25] Deleted “means by that”
[26] Deleted “ya, but how does it come”

Session 12: no date
Regime change continued; tyranny, *politeia*

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —Aristotle's in a way—you didn't say it as a criticism, but just as an observation which we must make, that on the one hand, he regards tyranny as a polity, and on the other hand he says it is not a polity. What's your explanation?[i]

Student: Well, in part, that there's one that . . . and that is one factor involved in a politary regime is distribution of office, an arrangement and distribution of office; and certainly this can't be the case—of sovereign office, and certainly this can't be the case in tyranny. But I think mainly it stems from the fact that the end of a regime which identifies it as such, is good and the virtuous life—

LS: Or the common good—

Student: Or the common good, yes. And certainly a tyrant . . . himself.

LS: Ya, that is so. That is one difficulty that goes through the whole book of which Aristotle was of course aware. And he solves it himself, on a certain occasion somewhere in book 3, when he raises the question: What's the citizen? And for example, if by a very illegitimate rebellion certain people who were not citizens before [then] became citizens, are they citizens? That's the question. To which Aristotle says: They may be illegitimately citizens—or in Greek, they may be unjustly citizens—but they are citizens. And he refers to the general . . . other aspect, people may rule unjustly, i.e.,[1] their ruling may be illegitimate, but they rule like the rest. In other words, Aristotle was a man of common sense. And therefore this ambiguity was—or take another example. The famous discussion especially in the Middle Ages: Is an unjust law a law? According to the more favored view of the Middle Ages, an unjust law is not a law. But that's not Aristotle's opinion. We couldn't speak of unjust and bad laws if we didn't say they are laws; they are bad laws, just as a bad chair is nevertheless a chair. It's a—how shall I say—a chair *manqué*. How do you say it in English? A chair which[2] doesn't fulfill the function of the chair, it somehow misses the mark, but it is visible that the mark at which it aimed was to be the chair. So in other words, the ambiguity is perfectly defensible: to the extent to which it does not fulfill the natural function, tyranny is not a regime; but to the extent to which the crude fact of ruling exists, it is a regime. Yes?

Same Student: I think that this is the only place in which he says rather flatly that it means something which is not a kind of regime at all. Elsewhere he says . . . a perversion and unnatural, it has at least the character.

---

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: Ya, but if we remember the context, the example which he gives—because the member of the regime becomes fully clear from the example. Do you remember what [was] the example he uses? You take a nose.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: Now you have, well, there is a certain natural nose which not only fulfills its function but is beautiful. Now a perfectly normal, as a statue of Athena or Apollo . . . nose. And now you see all the slight modifications: a little bit of a snub nose, and a little bit of an eagle's nose. Now think of the many beautiful girls with little snub noses who are even beautified by that. So minor variations are irrelevant. But when you go beyond that and make a nose which would be super-snub or super-[hook] then it becomes ugly. And it is even imaginable that from a certain stage on it becomes useless as a nose; it can no longer fulfill the function of smelling. And then, in other words, if you go on and on in making such improvements because you think a snub nose is particularly nice, and then you say a hundred percent snub nose must be still nicer—think of the young man who is in love with the snub nose girl—and would then make a theory of it. Ya? And he would reach the conclusion that the perfectly snub-nose girl—and that would be just a caricature. In the end, it would cease to be a nose.

Now what is the analogy in political matters? You have a democracy, and you say government of the people, for the people, by the people; and the more it is government by the people, the more democratic it is. And then you would say: Well, government by representatives is only an imperfect form of government by the people—you know the famous arguments by the Marxists and so on, and so many others. So you say: All right, let us have as many referenda, as many public opinion polls as possible, and so on and so on. That is all more democratic in the sense that this is more snub nose. And so finally you get something which leads to the breakdown of democracy, ya? So that ceases to be a regime; and if you follow that, which in practice is as impossible as a completely snub-nose nose, it is no longer a nose. If you follow the logic of it, it would reach a system, a political system, which does no longer exist. I think that is what he means; and the argument is of course some importance, you see; in other words, when you are following the logic of democracy regardless, you destroy democracy. Not everyone knows that. So we should keep this in mind.

Now you made a number of observations. For example, you recognized what Aristotle says about education, political education, as the phenomenon now called political socialization. I am sure there is a kinship; but let us try to see whether it is not also a difference. What does it mean? I mean, if you disregard the high falutin' things and come down to the brass tacks, what does political socialization mean? Take the baby, which may be born a conservative or a liberal, according the famous verse, still he doesn't know it. So something has to be done about it. How does he become an actual conservative? If he would want to be conservative.

Same Student: Start by giving him expensive rattles, and . . . [Laughter] No, I mean it would take place —

LS: That would not necessarily do. There have been very wealthy liberals.

Same Student: No, the concept of—

LS: And very poor . . .

Same Student: Of political socialization here, I attempted in the sentence just after I made that—

LS: Yes, no, no, that was a very helpful remark, but let us follow it up.

Same Student: Yes. As I was going to say, I attempted to say in the sentence after that, that the modern concept differs essentially in that I think it is mainly directed in terms—it doesn't reach the personal life as much does Aristotle's teachings on the effects of education—

LS: I see, there is something in common. Let us try to get that out.

Same Student: Yes, the cultivation of an attitude—

LS: Yes. But how does it take place? I mean—

Same Student: Through teaching, through—

LS: Teaching, well, what kind of teaching do you give a five-year-old child? I mean, do you say: Let's read the Constitution together [laughter], or what do you do?

Same Student: Obviously not, but that's just it, political socialization —

LS: OK, go on. By what?

Mr. Reinken It's the way you teach the child to . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: By the way you teach the child to handle people.

LS: That is too complicated.

Mr. Reinken: Even tones of voice, forms of address teach the child about social classes and make a conservative of them. [Laughter] . . . the habits and assumptions.

LS: But how does it go? How does it go? How do you do this terrific thing?

Student: You get them to act in a certain way—

LS: How do you do it? Do you take a school, or what? . . . telling. The telling doesn't have to be done, that is true, by articulate words, it may be done by inclination . . . Yes, but what does this telling mean? That is not general telling. For example, you tell him: This is a treat. That is not quite the same kind of telling. What do you do? Pardon?

Student: It is in part the teaching of a moral code, a standard—

LS: You are so sophisticated! [Laughter] [3]I give you one example. You say: This is not nice. This is not nice. And you can say . . . or only shaking your head, if shaking the head means in your society disapproval, or in other societies it means the opposite. But what is the point? There are certain things which a child—for example, you do not have to tell the child to have hunger. I mean, you may have to tell him how to satisfy hunger, in the case of a human being. Not in the case of a puppy, but that is another matter. But there are certain things which are mediated, we can say, which we learn only by a certain kind of mediation, but there must be some natural incentive. Let us use the old-fashioned language: a convention is introduced in the mind of the child. It is molded by these conventions, but there must be a natural peg, a natural peg in the child on which you can hang the convention. What is that? I suppose the old story: love; a desire for being praised and abhorrence of being blamed. You can also use the word approbation; there is honor, there is glory, [or] simply [to be] liked or to be disliked. That is a way in which it takes place, and that I think is also what the people mean today; for example, the people who would bring up a child as a conservative—to use this absolutely un-American distinction, conservative-liberal, that comes from . . . you, by praising, say, a liberal senator and blaming a conservative, making nasty remarks when a conservative president appears on the TV, and making a smiling, gratifying [remark] when you see a liberal senator. This kind of thing. Gradually, after a short while the child will have accepted it. Is that what Aristotle is talking about? I mean, this thing exists, there's no question; but the question is whether that is Aristotle's concern.

Student: I was just going to say that, on an earlier point about the teaching of a child by telling him . . . these certain things, and I think there is some evidence that it is a matter of attitude, particularly in terms of the parents' attitude where the child is concerned, the people around them rather than simply being told—

LS: I mean, sure, actions; but still, the child, the small child would not necessarily understand that in a given case the parents act on the principle, "Be particularly considerate when dealing with underdogs." Somehow the word has to be produced sooner or later. You can also have other expressions for that. So without language, I think it is impossible. But is that what Aristotle has in mind, or is it a special kind of political socialization which he has in mind? Well, we spoke now of the example of conservative or liberal, growing up into conservativism or liberalism. Is this the problem of Aristotle here? What does he speak about in his own terms? He doesn't speak of political socialization. I'll tell you why he doesn't do it: because he would say socialization is not necessary at all. Every human being, even a baby in the cradle, is already somehow socialized by the peculiar—not only because it needs its mother's breast and other kinds

of care, but the peculiar helplessness which the human baby has compared with other young animals shows that he is meant to be "quote socialized" connected with that. So socialization takes care of itself.[4] In other words, he is social to begin with. He is undeveloped in every respect and therefore also in his sociality. That is nothing new. What does Aristotle speak about? He doesn't call it —

Student: I suppose the—then maybe he is speaking of the inculcation of actions and attitudes in terms of specific—

LS: Do me a favor, how does Aristotle call it?

Same Student: Spirit, attuning, influence.

LS: He has a very common word which we use all the time, a very simple word: education. He speaks of education. And so, number one. All right, we can say if you bring up a child to be conservative, that's also an education. But what kind of education? Does Aristotle mean the education to conservative, or liberal, or radical, or whatever there exists on the rainbow, does he speak of that? Because we must recognize the present-day analogon to what Aristotle means. Education to what? I'm amazed—otherwise you understood the main lines very well. An education towards the regime, not towards the party. So in other words, the education to democracy when democracy is established, to oligarchy when an oligarchy is established. That's the point. And Aristotle would say an education toward a special party is politically most undesirable because it aggravates, it divides the things which exist anyway. If Aristotle is right or wrong in that matter would depend on a very close study of the goodness and badness of parties, into which we cannot [go]. Aristotle has the old-fashioned view that parties are a disease of the body politic, a view which, as you know, lasted [a] very long time: in the *Federalist Papers* you still find the traces of the older view. Parties are perhaps inevitable, but they are not good; whereas the prevalent view today is that they're something good. That's a very long question; and the fact that it seems to be practically decided for the Western countries since the nineteenth century surely of course doesn't prove that it will always be so decided, and still less does it give us a sound theory of parties. For that purpose, one would have to make quite a few reflections and think about that. When that came up for the first time, that someone spoke in an approving manner of parties and not merely as a kind of inevitable pestilence—I mean, in the older literature you can distinguish between those who say it is an avoidable pestilence and those who say it is an inevitable pestilence, but the present-day view is that they are no pestilence at all but are an essential part of the working of a free society. And one would have to go into that very difficult question which is usually not raised because people take the given, the now given for granted. They absolutize it, and that is called objective science. Now if you would go back, where would you start, Mr. Denny? I mean, if you would try to clarify that, go back behind the conventions of the present day and dig deeper into the problem, how would you proceed?

Mr. Denny: How would I proceed, meaning as a method? Or where would I look? At which specific people?

LS: Ya, because if the method is not spelled out into a researchable project, it is of very little use.

Mr. Denny: Well, I think my method would be to go back and examine what has been said about parties in the past, and probably back to people like Burke and Bolingbroke who first began to talk of parties as parties. Most of the literature, say, talking about parties before then, conceive [of] them more in terms of faction, factions—

LS: Yes, sure. In other words, pestilence.

Mr. Denny: Yes, pestilence, correct, and in certain—I think the modern view of parties begins about that time; and from then on you get a kind of an incorporation of the party into the parliamentary system, and with the legitimization of the parliamentary system you also get . . . party system.

LS: Ya, and you would have to consider for example that the European distinction between conservatives and liberals was really based on an overall view of political society, that it is a society which requires both progress and order; and therefore there should be representatives of the two elements, progress and order, ya, conservative and liberal.

Mr. Denny: . . . make that parties themselves, even from the relatively recent time they have been spoken of as parties, have changed their character, that is their inherent character, so that they're not exactly the same sort of thing any more.

LS: Sure, and you have to consider—

Mr. Denny: And this again, this again forces one to reconsider whether they're good and bad in the terms that were first put, because they're different kinds of phenomenon, they have to be reconsidered.

LS: Well, I would like to draw your attention, at least some of you, to a statement which I regard particularly informative. It is indeed unfortunately not written by a political scientist or an[5] academic specialist in parties but a practical specialist in parties, namely, Winston Churchill, who as you know switched parties more than once, and that did not detract entirely from his political success as you also know. He discusses it in his *Marlborough*, when he speaks of the situation as it existed under William of Orange at the beginning,[ii] and where it was absolutely an open question whether one should not have national cabinets[6]—meaning both Whigs and Tories—rather than a fanatical Whigs one[7] and a pure Whig party. The fanatical Tories wanted to have a pure Tory party. Churchill discusses that with an amazing open-mindedness and does not reject it as a pipe dream. But the decision was taken at that time, more or less. Except in times of great crisis, you have party government.

[ii] Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), vol. 1, 44-45.

One would also, I believe, here consider one point which as far as I know is not considered the literature, and that is this. If you take the clearer example of the continental European or even altogether the European parties, with clearly different principles, so this party system is then based on the view that in a society there ought to be—there ought to be—a variety of subordinate principles. Not the highest principles, otherwise there would be no possible consensus; but of very important subordinate principles, such a variety is good. That is the premise of a very powerful view of parties. This view I believe did not arise in a political context proper but was prepared by something earlier which you all know and I think people usually don't think of when they speak of the problem of parties, and that is religious tolerance. Religious tolerance means exactly that people can have entirely different principles of very great importance but which are politically speaking subordinate to the concern of peace or however you call it. You know? And I think that one should study how far the notion of religious tolerance, as a theory of religious tolerance as it came to be developed in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, is not a kind of hidden background for these political religions, if I may say so, which are the parties. Yes?

Mr. Denny: Well, I think this last point you made is supported in a fairly prominent article on parties, by a man named Leslie Lipson who, in analyzing British parties,[iii] the evolution of British parties, makes this very point, in other words, that they, that these two parties, at least in the nineteenth century, were based on this kind of precursor kind of religious issue which underlies even until very late a sort of strange ideology . . .

LS: Ya, the only question—sure, I didn't know that, I am very glad; but I think what I would want in addition is to see whether there is no linkage theoretically between the theory of parties in the earlier formative stages and the theory of toleration as developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Yes?

Student: In reference to Aristotle, I wonder if his emphasis on the *polis* as a form of government in which men are—in which most citizens are familiar with their rulers and . . . virtue connected with its opposition parties, and it occurs to me that a situation of the type he describes, parties would play a role, and a pernicious role, that would be very different from a situation where you aren't familiar with the rulers, yet in which the party system, the religious party system may be primarily a method of institutionalizing a certain kind of familiarity on the part of some of the citizens with the rulers.

LS: Ya sure, that could all be. But I think that was not the original legitimation of parties. And in addition, you have of course parties, and very passionately opposed parties in large societies, much larger than a city: think of the Guelphs and Ghibellines; that went through the whole Western world, and Protestant–Catholics, and that was not exactly nonviolent for some time.

[iii] Leslie Lipson (1912-2000), political scientist, author of *The Great Issues of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science* (1954).

Same Student: . . . if you take parties where they work best, rather than where they do worst, for instance, say, in places like France, I guess, if you take a place like Great Britain, this element . . . you analyze what they do today, may be very important.

LS: Ya, there is no question. But still, the difficultly I think which arises immediately when one would go in the deeper stratum of the theoretical consequence of party, I mean,[8] surely that something works is for practical reasons sufficient at the time. But[9] even for practical reasons, you have to go beyond that because what is working means it has worked from then till now. Some thoughts about the future are inevitable if you want to—and therefore in order to get the necessary perspective, you have to go back to other situations in which the system did not yet exist and hence [did] not work.

Same Student: Yes, the only other point I would make is that for this reason it is terribly important to go back to Aristotle, because I think the Aristotelian conception of familiarity described is—I raise this for its theoretical rather than its practical significance, and I think in terms of if one wanted to reconstruct or construct a theory of parties today, one might very well go back to that concept, which I think might very well explain, say, the success of Britain in this area as opposed to France—

LS: Ya, but the question is this, you mean because of the local constituencies and all the fact that it was for a very long time a small number of big families who ruled the country, but what kind of familiarity do you mean now?

Same Student: Well, what I am essentially saying is that, for one thing, it is the party system that reintroduces as much as it can the Aristotelian concept of establishing familiarity by the ruled with their rulers.

LS: Ya, ya, sure. That is a great problem of mass society in all areas. Sure. Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: . . . continue this part of the discussion—

LS: No.

Mr. Faulkner: Because if you did, I had a point that —

LS: All right, then make it. [Laughter]

Mr. Faulkner: You mentioned religious tolerance: couldn't one take it as a forerunner of many principal parties—couldn't one take it even farther, and say that the notion that opinions belong out of political control strictly, out of the realm of the sacred and go right back to perhaps the strength of the Christian church and their theoretical ideas.

LS: I believe, and that has been said many times, that the ideological character of modern politics is a kind of heritage from the religious Western tradition. I mean, you must have heard this *n* times, that these things, clearly in the case of communism and fascism, of course, that these are political religions. But the question is whether this element of the

political religion is not also present to some extent at least in democracy. That is what you implied, or did I misunderstand?

Mr. Faulkner: I didn't mean to say that . . . just that the notion that there is a sphere of opinion which is not the concern of the political order.

LS: Oh, I see, ya.

Mr. Faulkner: One could go back not merely to toleration of religion, but even before that, the notion of . . .

LS: Yes, but that leads into a very difficult question, whether to the extent to which that is true, is not the church itself a political entity, to use this awful word "entity." You know, you must not forget that such a term as the—how was Christendom called, traditionally? The Christian republic, the Christian commonwealth: here you have a political expression. And the distinction between the political and the secular according to which from this point of view only the secular is the political would not be sufficient then for a full understanding of the church, say, in the Middle Ages. That would be a very wrong.

But there is one point regarding which I have simply to apologize, and that concerns the external causes of the destruction of tyranny. I simply had forgotten these ten lines last time, and so I said a thing which is not, and I must therefore eat my words. Now clearly, Aristotle says in this section, in 1312b at the beginning, that tyrants are frequently destroyed by external causes. And he refers there—perhaps we read that passage. The beginning of 1312b.

Mr. Reinken:
One of the ways in which a tyranny may be destroyed—and the same is true, as we have already noted, of all other forms of government—is by external causes. Another state, with an opposite form of constitution, may be stronger than a tyranny. The conflict of opposite principles will obviously lead such a state to will the destruction of the tyranny; and where there is a will, and power behind it, there is always a way. This opposition of constitutions may take different forms. (1312a40-1312b5)

LS: Ya, and so we don't need that. In other words, by the very difference of regimes, there is given a desire to destroy the different regimes. But the desire is of course not identical with the power to do so, and therefore people don't do it. But think of [the] present day: if we could wish the Soviet government and some other things of the same kind would disappear, unfortunately, we can't do it. Vice versa. But Aristotle makes this universal, and says that every regime has the tendency to universalize itself; and since tyranny is particularly atrocious and also very rare, it is—so to speak, it is his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him. That is surely what Aristotle says.

Now this leads, as Mr. Butterworth wisely remarked, to a fundamental issue in international politics or in the doctrine . . . That is absolutely true, but I do not know how you meant that.

Student: What I meant by that was the debate on ideological imperialism. In other words, the extent to which there is a dynamic doctrine to the regimes which leads them to wish to impose upon on others their own forms.

LS: Ya, now of course that is a somewhat special formulation, "ideological," because you presuppose there must always be an ideology, which Aristotle denies. For example, the tyrant in Aristotle doesn't have an ideology; he may have certain convenient lies, but that's not ideology. Now let's forget about ideology. Now the question is this, that the traditional view based on classical literature, Aristotle among others, was that any state may effect changes in any other state because that state is wicked. Wicked. Traditionally expressed: if a given state commits crimes against moral laws, natural law, it is legitimate for any other state to interfere with that, to stop that. That was the traditional view. And needless to say, that's not quite the same as what Aristotle says, but as far as international law is concerned it amounts to the same thing. If intervention[s are] on grounds of disapproval with the established regime, they're legitimate. Aristotle has [no] doubt about it, and nor did the whole tradition have any doubt. So in other words, wars of civilization, as they have sometimes been called, were regarded as legitimate by the tradition. And such works like Thomas More's *Utopia*, you know where the war of civilization plays a very great role, simply follows the tradition. The last great statement on this effect you would find in Hugo Grotius's *Laws of War and Peace*.[iv] But Grotius had already defended—in the meantime a school had emerged which had said [that the principle that] you cannot interfere with another state is in order, unless you yourself have been hurt by it, by that state. Not by its methods; in other words, if this state has done you wrong, then you may . . . but that you can't do in any case.

Now this view was developed by certain Spanish thinkers in the sixteenth century, Vasquez, Molina[v]—they are sometimes called fathers of international law—and they did it for a very respectable reason: they saw what the Spaniards had done to the Indians in America and on grounds of a war of civilization against these savages, and they thought everyone would be better off if this were stopped once and for all. Now later on, with the development of the doctrine of sovereignty that became of course axiomatic, nonintervention: there is no higher judge of any state except the state itself. Needless to say that the older tendency, which has deep roots in human nature, continued up to the present day, that goes without saying. But as far as theories concerned, I think the notion that a war of civilization, as we may call it, is in itself legitimate is generally speaking the traditional view. And I simply had completely forgotten this connection; therefore I made that glaring error I made last time.

[iv] Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516); Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis* (*On the Law of War and Peace*) (1625).

[v] Ferdinand Vasquez de Menchaca (1512-1569), Spanish jurist and author of *Controversiae illustres* (1564); Luis de Molina (1535-1600), Spanish theologian and author of *De iustitia et iure*.

Now there were some other points which you mentioned. You pointed out rightly the topical character of Aristotle's analysis of tyranny. It is indeed amazing; and certain things obviously have not changed at all, that is quite true. But you said—you referred to the unheard-of improvements which tyranny has made in these 2300 years since Aristotle. I think you are right, but I would say that doesn't affect the truth of Aristotle at all, because [these are] the same kind of things—I mean,[10] if you have these beautiful things where you can listen in to any conversation people have in their bedroom, and that makes the control, the abolition of privacy still more effective, but the aim is the same: abolition of privacy. Ya?

Student: I didn't want . . . this question . . . but I do think that if you accept the point made that Aristotle considers tyranny is unstable, these new tools that tyranny has might cause us to reevaluate—

LS: That is an important point. That is indeed an important point. But unfortunately our experiences are too short. In the case of Mussolini and Hitler, Aristotle's diagnosis proves to be correct; in the case of Soviet Russia—well,[11] how long does it last now? Forty-two years or so. All right, so that is perfectly within the time span, so we have to leave it to future generations to see whether Aristotle was [right], but it is truly a subordinate matter because no one can deny that something radical has changed between Aristotle and us, and that might very well be one of the consequences of it.

Now then the last point. You gave a fair summary[12] of Aristotle's critique of Plato. But we should take that up perhaps, begin with that in 1316a. Aristotle concludes this book with a critical analysis of what apparently was the only earlier discussion of the subject of risings plus changes of regimes, namely, Plato's *Republic*, book[s] 8 and 9. Now let us read the beginning, Mr. Reinken? Mr. Reinken is our professional reader.

Mr. Reinken:
We may note, in conclusion, that the subject of constitutional change is treated by Plato in the *Republic*; but the treatment is defective. In the first place, he fails to mention specifically the cause of the change peculiar to his own first and ideal constitution. (1316a1-4)

LS: You see, the word, what he translates "peculiar" means, literally translated, proper, particular—what is proper to that, peculiar to that. That is the point. That is Aristotle's concern, always with the peculiar, with the proper of a thing. Ya? And not sweeping. Not sweeping. That's the general criticism. And now why does he not do it? We do not have to read that. The main point: the reason which Plato gives, [that] everything which has come into being perishes, aplies to every change, that doesn't help us to understand the change from the rule of philosophers to the rule of Spartan gentleman. Is he not right? And how? We must later on see perhaps what Plato meant by that. And the nuptial number, of course; that is also not a clear explanation.[vi]

[vi] *Republic* 545d ff.

There is a little point which we should read a little bit later on, after he spoke of the nuptial number, and that is when he says that nature sometimes produces inferior men. Do you have that? Immediately, four lines later, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
This implication, in itself, is perhaps not incorrect: there may be persons who cannot possibly be educated or made into good men. (1316a10-11)

(Oh, the earlier sentence?)

The implication here is that the reproduction of the species sometimes issues in men of poor quality, who are beyond the reach of education. . . . [vii] But why should this be a cause of change peculiar — (1316a9-11)

LS: No, what did he say in this parenthetical remark? "For it happens that there are some regarding whom it is impossible that they can be educated and become decent men."[viii] That is a very, very important remark. It is not unique, but this [is] perhaps not the clearest remark of Aristotle. Let us consider for one moment what it means. Some people cannot be educated. "Educated" means here morally educated, as it almost always means in Plato and Aristotle. Some people cannot become decent because they do not have the nature for that, required for that. What does that mean? It is a very important statement. What does it mean? Someone brought up on a former occasion the problem of natural law in Aristotle; according to the ordinary understanding of natural law, a natural law is a law which obliges all men, and this implies that all men are able to comply with it. Not with all—surely there are refinements of the natural law which are not accessible to everyone, but the crudest and most massive prohibitions are accessible to everyone. For Aristotle that doesn't exist; some people are simply—and that does not refer merely to moronic people, where everyone would admit it, but also for other reasons, because they are not moronic at all but they have such a temper, such a mixture of the elements in them that they cannot be controlled and cannot control themselves.

I should mention this in passing in connection with this discussion. When people speak today of natural law, and for some centuries, they think mainly according to the Western tradition of something like the Decalogue, the second table of the Decalogue, the prohibition against murder, theft, and so on. That didn't play such a great role for Plato and Aristotle—not that they were in favor of murder and theft, which God forbid, but from their point of view, these were the least interesting things. Every society, even the tyrant will somehow take care that these things be prevented; the interesting things are the higher things, namely, the proportional equality, this consideration. Therefore, the question of natural law in the traditional way, directly opposed to Plato and Aristotle, lies something athwart to what they were interested in. But this only in passing. Let us read on where we left off.

[vii] Mr. Reinken now skips over the sentence he had initially read, which turns out to be the sentence that Strauss particularly wanted to comment on.
[viii] Strauss retranslates the first sentence Mr. Reinken had read.

Mr. Reinken:
But why should this be a cause of change peculiar to the ideal state depicted in the *Republic*, rather than one common to all states, and indeed to all things in existence? There is a further point. Can the efflux of time, which, he says, causes all things to change, explain how things which did not begin simultaneously should simultaneously undergo change? (1316a12-17)

LS: In other words,[13] the velocity of change is a very important consideration. I mean, if you have a democracy for a thousand years or for one year is practically of the utmost importance. And the general principle which Plato gives doesn't explain why the one thing lasts so long and the other so short. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Does a thing which came into existence on the day before the turn of the tide change simultaneously?

Again, we may ask why the ideal state should turn into a state of the Spartan type. Constitutions change, as a rule, more readily into an opposite than into a cognate form. The same argument also applies to the other changes mentioned by Plato, when he depicts the Spartan type as changing into oligarchy, oligarchy into democracy, and democracy into tyranny. The very reverse may equally happen: democracy, for example, can change into oligarchy, and indeed it can do so more easily than it can change into monarchy.

When it comes to tyrannies Plato stops: he never explains whether they do, or do not, change, nor, if they do, why they do so, or into what constitution they change. The reason of this omission is that any explanation would have been difficult. The matter cannot be settled along the lines of his argument; for on those lines a tyranny would have to change back into the first and ideal constitution, in order to maintain continuity in the revolving cycle of change. (1316a17-29)

LS: Let us stop here. You see, Aristotle takes it for granted that Plato must have meant a cycle, as I mentioned on a former occasion. And that of course would raise the most annoying question, that the best regime should somehow emerge out of the worst, out of tyranny. That is awkward. The point which Aristotle makes can be said very simply: that is a mere sweeping assertion contradicted by innumerable facts. It's not true that oligarchies move and change into democracies; we have seen the opposite and so on and so on. So Aristotle is absolutely right. What could one say in defense of Plato? I suppose, I hope there are quite a few of you who have read these most eloquent pages; and does Aristotle really exhaust the issue by his sound remarks, his absolutely sound remarks? What did Plato mean? What Aristotle does not take into account, perhaps? What would, say, a modern Plato enthusiast say in reply to these pedestrian remarks of Aristotle? Pedestrian, if true. Ya?

Student: Does it have anything to do with Plato not so much analyzing historical change but the applying of virtue? Because it seems to me that as you move into the *Republic*, you become less virtuous; there's a real virtue in the Spartan gentleman, but it's all . . .

LS: But still, Plato says much more, that this Spartan order—Sparta of course not taken as this individual example, but this type of order—will necessarily change into rule of rich, oligarchy. That is what Plato says. Now historical change: the word is inapplicable to both Plato and Aristotle. There are simply changes of regimes. What can one say? Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: Is it that habituation isn't enough, and once you get away from reason, the philosophers . . . continue.

LS: Why should—?

Student: I was wondering, this may be going a bit far, but could one say in a somewhat modern Marxian manner that the stages have simply been skipped, that the cycle had been there, but it had gone very rapidly.

LS: No. I think, no, the Marxist views are not—I mean, Marx says that as a matter of fact the feudal order changes a bourgeois and bourgeois into the communist—

Same Student: —but what I am saying . . .

LS: But that would be only complicating borderline cases, that would not be the clear development. No, no. Yes?

Different Student: Plato's concerned with showing the imperfection of politics rather than[14] pointing out that they do come into existence—

LS: No, I am very surprised that you didn't give the answer which I thought was obvious from the personal point of view. Mr. Kendrick?

Student: . . . change in principle . . .

LS: Yes.

Same Student: He doesn't admit it . . . justice at least.

LS: Yes. Now let us put it this way—that's also not the answer which I waited for, which I have then to give.[15] Plato connects two questions. The first is change of regimes; the second is the rank of the regimes. And Plato says the change follows the rank, the change is descent, is degeneration. But still, the ordinary answer given—I mean, for example, by A. E. Taylor,[ix] a very well-known student of Plato—is this: Aristotle, that's a terrible empiric; Plato is an idealistic philosopher, and he means of course something like ideal

[ix] A. E. Taylor, Plato: *The Man and His Work* (1908).

types, and he doesn't want to tell us what is going on in the real world.[16] Therefore the wonderfully clear character of the Platonic description compared with this very complicated matter, this change this way, that way, almost everything is possible. There is only one thing wrong with this explanation, and that is a lot, namely, one would have to show first that Plato regarded oligarchy, democracy, etc.—and the best regime too—as ideas. More radically, one would have first to show that from Plato's point of view there is an idea of the *polis*; and I believe there is no shred of evidence for that. So that won't work. But there is something which we can easily discern. Plato has an order of rank (that is perfectly defensible) from the best regime down to tyranny, but what does this order of rank have to do with the sequence in time?[17] If we look around, for example, don't we see that the imperfect, the undeveloped precedes the developed? With what right can he assume that the whole thing begins with the best regime? Here we are: with what right can Plato assume that the movement begins with the best? There is here a clear premise [from] which, if accepted, everything else follows. And what is that premise? No, no—that is not explicitly stated. Under what condition does the order of rank, from the highest to the lowest, coincide with the temporal order?

Student: You would start with the highest.

LS: But can't you express it in a form—you start: I as an observer—

Same Student: Oh, when it precedes all the other . . . in a certain form in a particular city.

LS: In a simple form of an equation [LS writes on the blackboard]: the best is the oldest, not only the first in rank. If that it is true, everything follows. If the best is the oldest, then the worst must be the youngest, i.e., the last, that is obvious; and the intermediate thing. Now this is of course, that is the real premise of Plato, a premise of which Plato knew that it was wrong, but at the same time an untruth of the utmost political importance, because all societies somehow also assume, however progressive they may be, that the good is the old.[18] This equation has always a very deep appeal to men. Now if the good is the old, then the best is the oldest; and then everything follows. So it is perfectly "quote logical," but nevertheless wrong; and therefore, because it is so, Plato himself makes clear that this is a mythical account—he calls it there a tragic account, and you know he refers to some verses in Homer there. That doesn't exist; what we believe [to be] an ideal construction, which is not meant to be empirically true but useful as a device for empirical studies, that doesn't exist there. It may have existed to some extent in Plato's astronomy, I do not know, but surely not there. And of course one would have to go into that question whether it is proper in a political work to make use of such mythical premises. That's the issue between Plato and Aristotle, and of course they did never discuss this question explicitly. We would have to reconstruct the argument on both sides—it is much more developed by Plato in the dialogues, his side of the matter—before we can answer that.

Student: Why would Aristotle take him so seriously?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Why would Aristotle take his account so seriously?

LS: Because Aristotle always takes the obvious, the surface, very seriously, even when he knows that this is only the surface, and I think that is the only sensible procedure. But the question is whether one can leave it at that.[19] His purpose was here to show, to make manifest the truth regarding changes of regimes. That he had done, and therefore he had to show that the only competitor for the same crown, Plato, said the thing which is not regarding the change of regimes, that's sufficient for his purpose.[20] Aristotle admits the principle that[21] it is not sufficient to refute a theory, you have also to make intelligible how the error arose. But that you do not have to do in each case. I am sure Aristotle had an explanation of that; in the case of the *Republic* he tried to trace it to the basic error, as you remember: the good is one; and hence the best is the most unified, and so on. He doesn't do that here.

Now there are a number of very important passages, one where we began today in 1309a33, which is almost the end of 1309a. "That one needs." We can summarize it; you don't have to read it. The qualities required for ruling offices, magistracies however you may call it. Now the three are, which are those three?

Mr. Reinken: Loyalty, capacity, and virtue.

LS: Ya, loyalty means more literally friendship towards the established regime. And then the greatest ability regarding the works, the actions, the functions of the ruling questions; and third, virtue and justice in each *polis*, that which is required for the polity. In other words, in a democracy, he has to be just in the democratic sense, not in the aristocratic sense, and so on and so on. Now what is the general answer, what is most important? You see, Aristotle does not speak here—that's very interesting and is concealed by the translation "loyalty"—he does not speak of patriotism; he speaks of loyalty to the regime. Now why does he not mention that? Well, one could say that is implied. It is implied. And on the other hand, it is in no way sufficient if he is a patriot, but not, say, in a democracy. He loves the city, but he does not love the democracy. The democracy cannot employ, the problem is not whether he is a patriot or not, the problem is whether he's loyal to the regime or not.

Now what is the answer, then? The interesting case? What is the most important? Well, that moral virtue is only then the most important if it is available in sufficient quantity. For example, in order to be a treasurer,[22] it is absolutely necessary that you be honest. But this honesty is not so rare, and at the same time the knowledge required for being a treasurer is according to Aristotle also very common. Therefore[23] in this case you can say honesty is the most important consideration. But in the case of general in a tough war, you may have a general who is a first-rate general but who is really an oligarch, and in addition, he may be an immoral man. There have been such cases even in the last war, in all camps, I have been told—immoral in the wider sense of the term. But Aristotle says in

this case [that] first-rate generals are so rare that we have to accept him although he is not very moral.

Now this is one of the passages, I suppose, which people mean when they say [that] in the fifth book Aristotle comes particularly close to Machiavelli—and also the section on tyranny. But let us not for one moment forget the difference between Aristotle and Machiavelli which remains always intact. What's the difference, if we take first his example? Well, Aristotle doesn't say that these things are incompatible, moral virtue and political ability. Aristotle says only in case you can't have all three together, which is the most urgent? That's an entirely different question; that it would be most desirable to have first-rate generals who are loyal to the regime *and* men of great moral integrity goes without saying for him. In addition, of course, Aristotle always speaks here, for example, in the case of the general, from the point of view of the city, which general she should prefer. He doesn't give advice to the general of how he could promote his self-interest by unscrupulous action, which is what Machiavelli among other things does. In addition, Aristotle notes in the sequel that moral vice can interfere with the fulfillment of the duties. He gives the example of a man who lacks temperance; it is obvious that someone who habitually—[x]

Student: . . .

LS: Very good. So in other words, moral virtue can interfere with success. That is Machiavelli. Very good. Can you—do you know an example of that, where moral virtue interfered with or would have interfered with success?

Mr. Reinken: The failure of the pious general to leave Sicily because of omens?[xi]

LS: What?

Mr. Reinken: The failure of the pious general to sail from Sicily with the enemy watching . . .

LS: Yes, but the question is: Was this piety not true piety? That would be the question. Do we need that? Yes, that's a question. He was regarded by quite a few moral Athenians as somewhat silly in this respect. So piety as he understood it is not necessarily moral virtue. Well, I give you a wholly mythical example but which says a lot, and that stems in this form from Machiavelli. The greatest commonwealth which Machiavelli believed to know was Rome, and Rome was founded by a fratricide: Romulus killing his brother Remus. Machiavelli contends on the basis of the old stories that only by such an act of this magnitude could Rome have come into being.[xii] What Machiavelli means is universal: every society of any political interest has such a thing built in. At some time—it doesn't necessarily have to be the first moment—at some time such a thing must

---

[x] The tape was changed at this point.

[xi] Mr. Reinken is referring to Greek general Nicias, whose connection with the Sicilian expedition is presented in book 7 of Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

[xii] Machiavelli, *Prince*, chapter 6.

happen if it is to become a great and prosperous society. And of course, if someone would say that time has a healing character, [that] usurpation can be justified by beneficence later on, that doesn't do away with the fact that you began with usurpation. You know that is just as a gangster who later on becomes respectable and gives students scholarships; I mean, he nevertheless was originally a gangster. So this question arises. But it is needless to say, that in practice that is very difficult to prove; Machiavelli wisely chose such a mythical example because in actual fact you always have very complicated situations where a clear decision of whether an injustice was committed or not cannot be easily gotten. But I was very much impressed in reading Henry Adams's analysis of the Louisiana Purchase,[xiii] which he presents as a very dubious transaction, you see? Napoleon didn't own what he sold, and Jefferson bought it nevertheless. [Laughter] And now what would this country be without the Louisiana Purchase? And that—I mean, there are other examples; that was a great problem. Aristotle refuses to go into that at all. That we have discussed. Now we may perhaps now turn to the beginning of the discussion of monarchy in 1310a, end.

Mr. Reinken:
We have still, however to treat of the causes of destruction, and the means of preservation, when the government is a monarchy. Generally, what has already been said of constitutions proper is almost equally true of kingships and tyrannies. (1310a39-b3)

LS: Now what did he say? I'm sorry, I didn't hear. What has been said about?

Mr. Reinken: Constitutions proper.

LS: Ya, no, that is—now Aristotle uses here the word *politeia* [LS writes on the blackboard], which has many meanings. Now the most general meaning is regime, and then it would apply of course to kingship as well as to any other; but in the most narrow sense it means one special regime, and that is the polity—you know, the one between oligarchy and democracy in which you have a not-very high but not altogether negligible property qualification, and generally speaking the men who are able to equip themselves with heavy arms form the citizen body. But then you have an intermediate [LS writes on the blackboard] . . . which is . . . that we have here, and here *politeia* means republic, what we understand today by a republic, a nonmonarchic regime. That's very interesting, that such a concept for a nonmonarchic regime existed. And that of course is in a way necessary, because when Aristotle says the regime is the citizen body—what is translated here, I believe, as the constitution is the government, but what it really means, [that] the regime is the citizen body does not make sense if you don't have a body, more than one. In other words, there is a certain natural kinship between the *polis* and republic rather than one man's rule. There are quite a few passages especially in the fifth book where *politeia* obviously has this meaning. Yes.

And now then he explains in the sequel first the difference between kings and tyrants. Generally speaking, a king is a man who takes the side of the gentlemen, and the tyrant is

[xiii] Henry Adams, *The History of the United States 1801-1817* (1889-91), vol. 2: *During the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson;* compare Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* 14.

a man who takes the side of the common people. That's the way in which he begins. Now let us see; first there is one little passage in 1310b towards the end when he speaks of the older kings. That kingship somehow belongs together with aristocracy—after he spoke of Peisistratus.

Mr. Reinken:
Kingship, as we have already observed, may be classified as being in the nature of an aristocracy. Like aristocracy it is based in merit. The merit on which it is based may consist in personal (or family) qualities; it may consist in benefits rendered; it may consist in a combination of both of these with capacity. (1310b32-34)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. You see here Aristotle makes the distinction between virtue and beneficent actions. Is that not interesting? Do you understand that? Do you understand that? After all, is not the virtuous man identical with the beneficent man? Ya?

Mr. Reinken: Napoleon . . .

LS: What was that? He was?

Mr. Reinken: He did beneficent actions.

LS: That is really controversial. [Laughter] To some extent—no, but take a less difficult case, ya?

Student: It was said earlier how one can be superficially acting in a beneficent manner, but the reasons he's acting in that manner are really something not virtuous. He had personal gain in mind.

LS: Ya, and perhaps also the other way around: not every virtue has in itself a beneficent character, by which I do not mean that it is maleficent but that it is indifferent in this respect. So in other words, Aristotle is not a utilitarian. Virtue means the excellence of a human being, and this excellence[24] in no way necessarily exists in beneficence. It may exist—well, in a larger view it would be beneficent, but it would not show itself in particular beneficent actions necessarily. And on the other hand, the benefactor may be a very unsavory fellow. Sure. That we must never forget. Now a little bit later, in 1311a near the beginning, where he says the aim of the tyrant, do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
Tyranny, as we have often noted, is just the opposite. It has no regard to any public interest which does not also serve the tyrant's own advantage. The aim of a tyrant is his own pleasure: the aim of a king is the Good. (1311a2-6)

LS: So, noble. That he really should[xiv]—the noble. The noble. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xiv] Strauss objects to the translation.

We can see the results which follow. A tyrant covets riches; a king covets what makes for renown. The guard of a king is a civic guard: the guard of a tyrant is a foreign guard of mercenary troops. (1311a6-8)

LS: Let us stop here. Now how is this connected? You see, Aristotle had said first in order to—that was, you were somehow aware of this difficulty. There's a king [LS writes on the blackboard] and a tyrant. And the king is supported by the gentlemen and the tyrant by the common people. And here his aim is the noble, and here the aim is the pleasant; and here civic guards, and here [a] foreign guard. Aristotle doesn't try to explain the connection. Now can we—is there a connection? Is there a connection between these . . . Well, I mean, are the common people concerned with the pleasant, whereas the gentlemen are concerned with the noble? Is that so, or is it more complicated?

Mr. Reinken: Gentlemen already have the pleasant.

LS: No, no, gentlemen . . . concerned with the noble. But are the common people concerned with the pleasant? Not quite; they are generally speaking too poor for that. They are concerned with the necessities. The tyrant is of course not simply a common man; and therefore, as Aristotle says on a former occasion, people don't become tyrants in order not to starve, or in order not to freeze to death. [xv] So since they are blind to the noble, they are concerned with the pleasant. And since the tyrant, in order to be a full-fledged tyrant, must turn against the common people who first established him, therefore he needs the foreign guard. That's the somewhat complicated connection. But you had a difficulty here which I do not remember now. Could you remind me?

Student: It was that I didn't think that this was the major motive—the way I understood pleasant, pleasure and riches, I didn't think these were the major motives of a tyrant; if you consider four tyrants in the last two centuries, the two Napoleons, Mussolini, and Hitler, I don't really know whether you could say that these are the driving motives involved.

LS: Ya. Well, in the case of Napoleon III, profit played a very great role. He was terribly in debt and he depended absolutely on political success. Now on the other hand, these people, after having become rulers—the same applies also of course to Stalin—lived very well. You must have read descriptions of these banquets and so on.[25] Aristotle would say it is by no means uninteresting that these—I mean, you must have heard in Churchill or in Hopkins's descriptions of the banquets . . . apparently much more lavish than you would get in the White House.[xvi]

Student: Yes, but not, I don't think—

[xv] *Politics* 1267a13-14 (book 2).

[xvi] Harry Hopkins, friend and close advisor to Franklin D. Roosevelt. See Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate Portrait* (1948).

LS: That doesn't mean that's the motive, but Aristotle would say: Does this way of life not throw a light on what is going on?[26]After all, you must not forget, under communism . . . a somewhat different story. But what Aristotle would say is the fact that these were not men of very great temperance—Napoleon I, too—is by no means irrelevant for the consideration. That's the first point. But the other point: I grant you that these people[27] could have become businessmen or they could have been very big businessmen . . . so they wanted something more. What is that, what they wanted more than mere pleasure and money? How would you describe that?

Student: The power to do to the state as they will. The power to impose their own minds, desires, as will on the state. Which is a form of pleasure, I suppose.

LS: No, no, no, oh no. In other words, I would leave it for the time being at the formulation: They did what they did out of the political idealism, however misguided they may have been. What did you want, Mr. Kendrick?

Mr. Kendrick: Well, I wanted . . . Glory—

LS: Yes, glory, that would be a part of the ancient view of that. Ya, but then Aristotle would say: Can men who strive for glory in this way which is utterly incompatible with true glory, can this be simply described as desire for glory or honor? That is the point. In other words,[28] Aristotle would say it is not sufficient to leave it at what even for this individual subjectively is the motive; one would have to make a discrimination. For example, the ancients: the word which we call ambition, translate [as] "ambition," means in Greek love of honor,[29] and they distinguish between the noble love of honor and the base love of honor. The question is whether this—well, we know these phenomena all the time; we observe them every day in politics and in private life, that there are two kinds of motivations fundamentally which induce men to strive for being outstanding, ya? This is a very ambiguous phenomenon. And what Aristotle implies is that in such cases where ignoble actions are required all the time, [they] cannot be understood in terms of a desire for honor even if the individual believes he is concerned with nothing but honor, and therefore this imputation that it is simply desire for pleasure and profit, and this kind of thing. Yes?

Student: According to this classification, then, what would Aristotle say about Lenin, would he consider him a king or tyrant?

LS: No, I think according to Aristotle's description Lenin surely would have to be described as a tyrant, I believe. But perhaps not quite, because in Lenin's—that's a complicated case; Aristotle says, you know? But I do not, I have made this statement many years ago and I can only repeat that: that modern tyranny, as all modern phenomena, cannot simply be reduced to the phenomena which Aristotle had in mind. There is something which equally affects both the good and the bad modern things which was not present in classical polities. All the old tyrants—there I think we can believe Aristotle and Plato, were concerned with the promotion of their interests, or their family interests; that amounts the same thing. They did not have causes. As Aristotle put it—

well, there was only one cause which could arise for them, and that is the good of the *polis*. Now a number of the tyrants were benefactors of their cities: Peisistratus in Athens, for example, surely. And the tyrants of today have much better press than ancient tyrants, some of them, than they had in ancient times. But Aristotle would say [that] these fellows do it only as a means, you know, just as a certain type of politicians who would espouse, say, a decent cause because it is a cause to which you are elected. And somehow we believe sometimes during a certain sense of discernment [that] this fellow stands for the decent cause not only because it would bring him votes [but] he would even do it the other way. In the other case we are absolutely sure, if the opposite happened to be popular he would be in favor of that. This is the basis of that. In modern times, there is always a cause. Think of Cromwell, to begin with, and then of Napoleon, then of Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and Lenin, of course, too. To use a word which we have used in this connection more than once, the modern tyrannies are all based on ideologies. There was no ideology there: there were lies, there were pretenses, naturally, but not a doctrine. Not a doctrine. Yes?

Student: . . .

LS: No, no, but we should really try to understand that, because we are not entirely concerned with Aristotle but with Aristotle to the extent to which he can help us. Ya?

Student: I thought that this was Mr. Bartholomew's stress on what I would call the psychological motive, does not really show up in Aristotle's formulation. I think Mr. Bartholomew's point was that the essence of tyranny can be the desire to dominate for the sake of domination,[xvii] or to impose one's will on other people for that alone. Modern psychology might say that there is a sadistic, masochistic side of the phenomenon.

LS: Ya, I know that. I must confess, I have seen—I know definitely only one case from my own observation where I saw a man doing the things he did obviously for this reason. He wanted to make people feel that he can make or break them. I mean, [it was] a case where there could be no doubt for any observer—I happened to see that in an examination, incidentally. [Laughter] [It was] quite clear, it had nothing to do with the merits of the case, it was quite obvious. But I would say [that] I think that on the basis of my experience it is very rare that it is merely done to make people feel that. In other words, I believe that the notion of power and desire for power as it is used today is in need[30] of a fundamental reconsideration. And I think that someone—for example, what we call[31] vanity is much more frequent than this isolated, ice-cold thing: Let him feel the victim. I mean, it may of course exist; surely it exists on other levels but it is always something absolutely degrading. For example, a nasty noncommissioned officer who just tries to show that "I am the boss," that happens, naturally. But I think this phenomenon which we call vanity, that someone wants to show himself superior merely for the sake of showing himself superior, is much more common, and that is not quite the same thing; it doesn't have this intention of hurting or what you call a sadistic element.

[xvii] Mr. Bartholomew was a student in the class.

Student: Just to return on that . . . decided you could balance authority against authority . . . discussion of Nazi regimes would stress the fact that the regime itself or Hitler was a kind—he is exactly the kind who generalized sadistic manners in authoritarianism.

LS: Yes, but, I mean you can use all these terms, but the point is this. When you say modern psychology, you refer to a number, to an infinite number perhaps, of books, articles so on and so on which are based on certain fundamental premises, on a certain approach, and where the question is, in the moment you question the approach, the results become dubious, you see. I mean, what questions were addressed to them. Now Hitler was, I think, an unusual—Hitler was in a way crazy, in a very massive way, in the sense which Mussolini was not crazy. Mussolini, nor Lenin, nor even Stalin as far as one can know, whether he did not develop in the last years a disease comparable to that of Tiberius,[xviii] the famous ceasarian insanity, I for one wouldn't dare to pronounce upon. One would really have to start from scratch, and look first of all on the manifest both pronouncements and actions, and they all in a glorification of cruelty belong to the Nazi creed, that is an undeniable fact. And which of course meant, if you want to proceed psychologically, very different things in the case of very different men. Some people who have no natural inclination to cruelty were taught to praise cruelty and to act cruelly. On the other hand, others, like Hitler himself, had a congenital desire to be cruel. But once you do that, you must admit of course that there are also very famous liberal democrats who have this quality of cruelty.

Student: Yes, but . . .

LS: So in other words, the real understanding would be—of Nazism, for example—would be this: what were the legitimations, justifications of this emphatically cruel doctrine, which as such has no parallel in any other doctrine? I mean, there were many doctrines which took cruelty in their strides, many doctrines, but the glorification of cruelty is of course something different. That one would have to do, and I believe that would immediately lead beyond psychology, because that becomes then a much broader problem, political and theoretical: Under what condition can cruelty appear as the most important thing?

I will give you one indication. There was one man who in a way prepared the Nazis, although he never became a Nazi, called Ernst Jünger.[xix] I think he is quite well known in this country too. Now Jünger wrote an essay on pain which is very interesting to read. On pain. And he made this assertion: that in our age (mind you, the limitation "in our age") the only possible virtue—he doesn't use the word virtue, but he means that—is the capacity to stand pain. Old-fashionedly expressed: the only virtue is courage. And I believe if one would start from that, one could see that[32] there are certain very broad reasons why this view should emerge under these conditions and especially in Germany. Courage as he understands it,[33] with emphasis on the bearing of the physical pain, and therefore of course the greater man is he who stands the greatest pain, can then be used

[xviii] See, e.g., Tacitus, *Annals*, books 1-6.
[xix] Ernst Jünger, "On Pain" (1934).

also for inflicting pain on others as a kind of test for them, and so on and so on. To assume that this has necessarily as its basis certain sexual perversions, I don't see the necessity for that. I mean, that is as far as I know unproven. You admitted that this was a bypath, ya? Or do you think it is—

Student: I don't know . . .

LS: What then was the difficulty which you had? Can you repeat it again?

Student: No, that's . . .

LS: Ya, but there are of course many other things. I can only mention this point: you remember we had the Aristotelian distinction between the three causes of rebellions: a state of mind; the end or ends; and thirdly, the opportunities or the occasions, the beginnings. The passage on tyranny contains a number of very important remarks on that subject, and especially there is a reflection on the importance of anger there; the point to which I referred before, anger. But it is also true that in the case of tyranny the situation is different from that in the case of republican changes, because in the case of any monarchic regime, the element of personal hatred is likely to be much more important than in the case of a republican regime; in other words, that someone wants to kill that individual without any thought of a change of regime except accidentally, that complicates matters considerably.

Now there is one more point. Mr. Rosenthal, in your paper, I thought this would be of some interest. You say [that] in the discussion of Athens and Sparta, a contrast is drawn to the treatment of Thucydides, the issue of the two cities is considered conceptually as opposed to the power of Athens and Sparta—in Sparta fear—which are operative in Thucydides's account of the war. Now what did you mean by that?

Student: What I meant by it was, I thought that Thucydides had a much more materialistic and a psychological . . . the causes of the war . . .

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, but Aristotle doesn't speak of the causes of the war; Aristotle says only that the Athenians in the war, during the war, established democracies wherever they could, and the Spartans established [oligarchies].[34] It is very hard to say what is the difference between Aristotle's and Thucydides's understanding of this matter. It is very hard. I can only state my general impression that in political and moral matters, I believe [that] all these great men agree; the differences, and they are very great sometimes, concern the reasons which they have. But I think the notion which we have in modern times that there are, say, conservatives and liberals, or however they may be called at different times in different countries, and perhaps some subdivisions of that, that is represented on the highest level of literature. I believe that is one of the greatest errors we can commit, if we assume that this existed in the past— [xx]

[1] Deleted "their ruling office can be"

[xx] The tape ends at this point.

[2] Deleted “has not, is not”
[3] Deleted “this is, I mean”
[4] Deleted “but the specific”
[5] Deleted “specialist in”
[6] Deleted “rather than”
[7] Deleted “one”
[8] Deleted “that is not”
[9] Deleted “you always”
[10] Deleted “you have, you may have better”
[11] Deleted “Well, you know, after all it doesn’t last yet, I mean”
[12] Deleted “but I think that, may”
[13] Deleted “the fact”
[14] Deleted “since”
[15] Deleted “and Plato has this”
[16] Deleted “that is, you know”
[17] Deleted “would not be”
[18] Deleted “that has always”
[19] Deleted “for his purposes”
[20] Deleted “the explanation”
[21] Deleted “you have”
[22] Deleted “you must”
[23] Deleted “the question”
[24] Deleted “starts not”
[25] Deleted “and the question”
[26] Deleted “I mean, you know?”
[27] Deleted “were not”
[28] Deleted “he would not”
[29] Deleted “and therefore and love of honor”
[30] Deleted “of a much”
[31] Deleted “vanity, ya”
[32] Deleted “this has a certain”
[33] Deleted “limited, I mean”
[34] Deleted “I would say—I do not believe”

Session 13: no date
Regime change; democracy and oligarchy (book 5)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —questions arising on the basis of the section could perhaps be counted. I mean, it all depends how you mean it. From Aristotle's point of view the question would really be the affirmative. And I see you wonder whether Aristotle's right in this point. [i]

Student: No, I think, I would answer the question, yet most . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: Most of the questions have been answered.

LS: Just as he did. But then the question would be: Is this a major preoccupation of Aristotle there, although surely implied. Now you made a number of points, one where I mention where you are surely wrong, I believe. When Aristotle speaks of the *dēmos*, the people, the common people, as characterized by lack of education etc., you say this refers only to the worst kind of a *dēmos*.

Student: Well, I did imply that—

LS: No, I think that's universal. We come to that. But that is minor. Your reference to the *Federalist Papers* was very apt. Aristotle comes here very close to this hard-headed . . . we will read that. As the distinction which Barker makes between political and civil liberty, one made doubt whether that is the best expression of that, but surely Aristotle's definition of democracy, or of freedom rather, is in need of some spelling out. Whether that is properly done by distinguishing between political and civil liberty is another question. As for your characterization of the whole section—"construction," that is, if I remember well, Barker's . . . Barker has headings for the individual books, doesn't he?

Student: Yes, he uses both construction and stability in the title of book 6. Aristotle, in the part that I am reporting on, does not use the word stability but he does use the word construction at one point . . .

LS: How does he call book 7, may I ask? What's the heading?

Mr. Reinken: "Political Ideals and Educational Principles."

LS: No, I see, no I have to take this up later because of the meaning of book 6. Before I turn to that, before . . . is Mr. . . . here? Yes, I read your paper. It was satisfactory. May I first take this up for one moment, because there are two points which are of some general

[i] Strauss responds to students' papers.

interest. In speaking of the polity—you remember the six regimes: kingship, aristocracy, polity, and then democracy, oligarchy, tyranny. "One of them, the most stable of forms, does not have special treatment in the description of the causes which motivate its end as opposed to its final cause. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the polity is the most ideal of all Aristotelian constitutional forms."[ii] Well, what do you say to this proposition, that the polity is, say, the best—or most ideal, I suppose you mean, of all Aristotelian polities? Is this the view of the class? Of other members of the class?

LS: Mr. Bartholomew?

Mr. Bartholomew: Given the condition of Aristotle's day, I think he would have said it is the best possible of his day.

LS: What do you say?

Same Student: I think that the best is the . . . explicit, he's explicitly said that he feels that the best form is monarchy.

LS: Ya, kingship. Yes, sure, that is clear. But there is a difficulty to which Mr. Bartholomew referred, although it is not exhausted by what he says. Aristotle speaks of the best which could be had by cities in general. There are still better ones which are, which require very special conditions. Is this all right? Let us leave it at that for the time being, although that is not the end of it.

Now what about the end? Does Aristotle not speak about the end, the purpose of the polity as distinguished from the other regimes? Well, oligarchy, wealth; democracy, freedom; aristocracy, virtue. What about polity?

Same Student: The good.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Actually, the end of any constitutions is the good.

LS: Ya, but that is common to all.

Same Student: common to all—

LS: But the specific end, just as the specific end of democracy is freedom, what is the specific end of the polity according to Aristotle?

Same Student: Virtue.

LS: Not quite; then it would be aristocracy. I noted here the passage, 1279a39 following, we don't have to read it. But Aristotle says—I mentioned this before, the polity is said

[ii] Strauss reads from the student's paper.

regime in which the citizen body or the bulk of the citizen body are the heavy-armed soldiers. And therefore the principle is military virtue, the virtue of war, and that is according to Aristotle the characteristic feature of the polity. But that surely does not exhaust that issue . . .

There was one more point, which I thought I should mention, on page six of your paper; ya, this is a point where you are correct, but which you would—we should have brought up. When you speak of the recipes Aristotle gives to tyrants, you mention that he should be externally god-fearing. That should be, "appear to be pious." That's correct. Is there some comment in order? I mean, I believe it is not necessary to explain why the tyrant is well-served if he's regarded as pious.

Same Student: Yes, well, Aristotle himself gives an explanation for that.

LS: Namely?

Same Student: Namely, that if people see that the tyrant is god-fearing, they will think that the gods like him. And this relationship people imagine there is between tyrants and the gods, so if he praises the god they should be kept from attacking—

LS: Ya, but on the other hand his piety would give them some guarantee that he recognizes some limitations.

Same Student: Of his goodness, too.

LS: Yes, yes.

Same Student: That's what Aristotle says.

LS: Yes, yes, but still. That is very true, but there is another comment which Aristotle naturally does not make, which we as the readers can't help making.

Student: Similarity to Machiavelli?

LS: That is also true, ya; but more immediately relevant: Aristotle makes no such remark in the case of any other regime. And one explanation would of course be it is particularly necessary in the case of tyranny. Good. Thank you very much.

Now let us turn to today's assignment. The first . . . at the beginning. In order to understand the meaning of this book which is in many ways repetitious, as Mr. Johns has seen, how does it come that Aristotle takes up again the issue of democracy and oligarchy, chiefly? Now let us turn first to the beginning of book 5, where we have a remark about the plan. Ya, read the beginning of book 5.

Mr. Reinken:

We have now practically completed our discussion of the first four subjects stated in our programme; and it only remains to treat, in conclusion, of the last. Under this head we have to consider the general causes which produce changes in constitutions and to examine their number and nature. We have also to consider the particular way in which each constitution is liable to degenerate—that is to explain *from* what a constitution is most likely to change *to* what. In addition we have to suggest the *policies* likely to ensure the stability of constitutions, collectively and individually, and to indicate the *means* which may best be employed to secure each particular constitution. (1301a19-25)

LS: Ya. Well, let us stop here. That is then the subject of book 5, isn't it, that what corrupts regimes in general and each regime in particular, and therefore what preserves regimes in general and each regime in particular. So we are through at the end of book 5, it would seem. There seems to be no further subject. By the way, the difficulties of the order of the *Politics* are so great that people have, editors have made in the nineteenth century a great variety of arrangements. Sometimes when people quote according to books, you have first to know according to which arrangement. This order which Barker has is the order in the manuscript, and therefore the only authentic order as far as we can know. But, for example, at the end of book 3, as you may recall, the end of book 3 is almost identical with the beginning of book 7. And therefore some people said: Well, you have to go on 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, and then bring in 4, 5, and 6. And there are all sorts of other arrangements. But we cannot go into that, that is the real difficulty of it. The serious issue is what's the meaning of book 6 following, given the statement at the beginning of book 5? Now the remark, which Barker made regarding book 6—how did he translate the title again?

Mr. Reinken: "Methods of Constructing Democracies and Oligarchies with a Special View to their Greater Stability."

LS: Let us say indeed construction, establishing. That is, seems to be the subject. And let us turn to 1289a, where we find a remark on this subject. You remember the book: book 4, at the beginning of book 4 he gives the general survey of what the subject of the political art is, in analogy of the gymnastic art, for example: the best simply, the best for—the average best. And then how to preserve any given regime, regardless of whatever is good or bad. Now in 1289a, when you—just read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
The sort of constitutional system which ought to be proposed is one which men can be easily induced, and will be readily able, to graft onto the system they already have. It is as difficult a matter to reform an old constitution as it is to construct a new one; as hard to unlearn a lesson as it was to learn it initially. (1289a2-6)

LS: Yes, stop here. What Aristotle has discussed chiefly up to now is how to improve or preserve an established regime. But he has not discussed the question of how to establish it from the beginning because—well, the reason was this, as would appear from the context: people have been much too much concerned with establishing from the beginning. Look, Plato's *Republic* and Plato's *Laws*, which are accessible to every one of

you, they deal with establishing regimes from the beginning, not with the question of how to preserve and how to improve. But in book 6, therefore, Aristotle turns to the question of establishing. Therefore it is clear that books 6 to 8 form a unity. Book 6 deals with the question of how to establish a democracy and oligarchy, and books 7 to 8 with how to establish the best regime. You can say that is incomplete, and it is very likely that the *Politics* as we have it is incomplete because there are quite a few references to things which Aristotle says he's going to do and which we do not have. And that is perfectly possible, that it is incomplete; but we can understand it nevertheless, this whole situation, by saying that democracy, oligarchy, and aristocracy, which is dealt with in books 7 and 8, are the most important regimes. The monarchic we have dismissed for various reasons; kingship is no longer possible. You can say kingship cannot be established, it emerges in the olden times without special art, a special art guiding people in establishing it. And tyranny shouldn't be established; the less we say about it, the better. And therefore the question would be this: Why not polity? Why not the polity, and that has to do with a certain problem inherent in the polity itself. Now what is that peculiar difficulty regarding the polity? Well, we turn perhaps to that later.

Now first, then Aristotle turns almost abruptly to the question of democracy and oligarchy. And we begin perhaps our study at 1317a18. That is the question. Now what Aristotle says is this: Let us discuss how to establish democracies and oligarchies; in the first place, democracies, and in that[1] we must not forget one very important lesson which we have been given before, namely, that there are various kinds of democracy. Now why is there such a variety of democracies, Aristotle asks again. And what does he say? He gives two reasons.

Mr. Reinken:
There are two reasons why there are several types of democracy. One has already been mentioned. [The reference is back to book 4—Mr. R.[iii]] This is the difference of character between the people of different states. (1317a23-25)

LS: How does—the difference of the *dēmoses*, if one can say that, the common people differ. He doesn't say the character. He says the *dēmos* is different in different cities. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Here you may have a populace of farmers; there you may have one of mechanics and day-labourers. The democracies which they constitute differ; but if you add farmers to mechanics, and then add day-labourers to both, you create a new difference which is not so much one between better and worse sorts of the same thing, as one between totally different things. (1317a25-29)

LS: Ya, and what Aristotle means by that is this: you can have in the same species better and worse; you still have the same species. For example, take a shoemaker. There is a species of artisans called shoemakers. And one is good, the other is bad; they belong to the same species. But then there is also, for example, if you take an average shoemaker

[iii] Mr. Reinken's comment is prompted by a footnote in the Barker edition.

and an average carpenter, they belong to different species. That means, in other words, the difference between good and bad does not in itself create a difference of species, as is shown by these examples. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The second reason for the existence — (1317a29)

LS: This is clear now, that democracy necessarily differs when the *dēmos* differs. Take the most extreme poles: If the *dēmos* is a peasantry, and on the other hand it is industrial workers, they'd have two radically different democracies, even if all the other characteristics of democracy would be the same, even the spirit of the two democracies were different. Now this is clear. Now we come to the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
The second reason for the existence of different types of democracy is the different possible combinations of the features which characterize democracy and are supposed to be its attributes. One variety of democracy will have fewer of these attributes; a second will have more; a third will have them all. Now there is a double advantage of studying all the separate attributes of democracy. (1317a29-33)

Should I go on?

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:
Such study not only helps in constructing some new variety which one may happen to want: it also helps the reform of existing varieties. (1317a33-35)

LS: You see, here that refers to the question discussed before: improvement and establishing, or preservation and establishment. But here establishing comes first. This word, the Greek word for establishing, *kataskeuazein*, occurs very frequently in this book, and I think by mere statistics of the usage, which I haven't made, and doubt if no one has made, one could establish that this is really the theme here from book 6 on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Men who are engaged in building a constitution will often seek to lump together all the attributes connected with the idea on which the constitution is based. But this is an error, as we have already noted in dealing with the subject of the destruction and preservation of constitutions. (1317a35-38)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. What he means is the story of the nose, the snub nose, you remember that example, and getting ever more snubby until it ceases to be a nose? A democracy which gets ever more democratic until it ceases to be democracy? Good. Ya, now what is the second thing, then? The difference of the *dēmos*, that's clear. Peasant, industrial workers, to [take] an extreme. What is the other point which he has in mind? Because it doesn't appear very clearly from[2] how Barker translates. There is another

reason: that we can say is the difference of democratic institutions. That's a different point of view, although there is likely to be a connection between the two. For example, direct democracy [and] representative democracies are obviously different democracies. And small property qualification, no property qualification whatever: difference. Suffrage for males only, or suffrage for all others, also different. Good.[3] Now we come to the crucial point, to the most precise discussion of democracy which we find in the *Politics*. Let us read that slowly. Let us read first the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
Let us now consider the postulates, the moral temper, and the aims, of democratic constitutions. (1317a38-39)

LS: Ya. Now it is hard to distinguish in the sequel these three elements, as if they were wholly independent from one another. The word which he says, postulates, is—in Greek it is the word axioms; axiom you know, but axiom doesn't mean originally what we understand by it, it means originally that of which one is thought worthy. *Axiōs* is worthy; an honor, rank, the position. Derivatively, it means that which is honored as it were with being the beginning of a demonstration, that which is assumed as the base of demonstration. Now Aristotle uses synonymously with that immediately afterward the word *hypothesis*, hypothesis; and later on, also definition, and still later, the originating principle. So Aristotle is here apparently deliberately [4]very imprecise in his terms, and that has something to do with the fact that this is after all is a political book dealing with phenomena which are accessible to everyone, every citizen, and therefore this kind of precision is not required. But I don't know whether that suffices as an explanation. Now let us turn then [to] what the hypothesis of the democratic regime is.

Mr. Reinken:
The underlying idea of the democratic type— (1317a40)

LS: Yes, that is hypothesis, ya.

Mr. Reinken:
The hypothesis of the democratic type of constitution is liberty. Liberty has more than one form. One of its forms consists in— (1317a40-b1)

LS: Well, no, that is not good. Let me try to translate the immediate sequel. "For this they are in the habit of saying that in this regime alone they partake of freedom. For, as they assert, every democracy aims at this," namely, freedom. Ya, now: "in freedom, one could say, is to be ruled and to rule in turn." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Go on then.

Mr. Reinken: . . . recognize that it was Aristotle's . . .

LS: Yes. Now that is one element: ruling and being ruled in turn. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The democratic conception of justice is the enjoyment of arithmetical equality, and not the enjoyment of proportionate equality on the basis of desert. On this arithmetical conception of justice the masses must necessarily be sovereign— (1317b4-6)

LS: The multitude. There were no masses in ancient times. The multitude must be sovereign, ya?

Mr. Reinken:
the will of the majority must be ultimate and must be the expression of justice. The argument is that each citizen should be on an equality with the rest; and the result which follows in democracies is that the poor—they being a majority, and the will of the majority being sovereign—are more sovereign than the rich. Such is the first form of liberty, which all democrats— (1317b6-10)

LS: No, that is the first *sign*, sign of liberty. Namely, you remember what that first sign is? What that first sign of—everyone talks of freedom, but freedom shows itself, manifests itself in various ways; and as a matter of fact, in two ways. The first is what, mentioned before? Where do you recognize where there is freedom? He has said it.

Student: Polity.

LS: Yes, polity derivatively, but . . . everyone rules and is being ruled in turn. Now the next?

Mr. Reinken:
The other form consists in 'living as you like'. Such a life, the democrats argue, is the function of the free man, just as the function of slaves is *not* to live as they like.

LS: Ya, literally, "for this they assert is the work of freedom, namely, that everyone can live as he likes, since it is the affair of the man who slaves to live not as he likes." The slave is a man who lives not as he likes, obviously, but as his master likes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This is the second aim of democracy. Its issue is, ideally, freedom from any interference of the government, and, failing that, such freedom as comes from the interchange of ruling and being ruled. It contributes, in this way, to a general system of liberty based on equality. (1317b13-17)

LS: Ya. Let us stop here, perhaps. Now let us see. Freedom is the aim of democracy, and a sign of freedom is the equality of all citizens, rule of the majority. Another sign, which is the work of freedom: everyone lives as he likes. Both are definitions of freedom. The question is: Is one of them prior or not? That was the question which was discussed by Mr. Johns in his paper. Now let us see.

Mr. Reinken:
Such being— (1317b17)

LS: No, we must first—oh no, we are not yet through. The first is speech. It speaks, one can say, of equality rather than of freedom; and I think this distinction between equality and freedom comes a bit closer than the distinction between political and civic liberty. So since the first does not speak of freedom itself, let us start from the second; and there freedom is said to be to live as one likes. That's freedom.[5] That is crucial, because to live as one likes could be meant[6] without any regard to political sense, or that could be forgotten. To live as one likes means not to be subject to anyone, because if you are subject to anyone, you can't live as *you* like, you have to live as he who is your master likes. Ya, but that is obviously impossible, and therefore you must make a compromise. You must be, you are subject to others; that can't be helped. Therefore, he to whom you are subject must also be subject to you. That's the maximum which you can expect as a reasonable man; and that means being ruler and being ruled in turn, and equality. So from this point of view, equality would be derivative from freedom. We want to live as we like, we don't want to have masters: therefore equality. Equality is itself not attractive. Yet the starting point may also be equality, and Aristotle in effect starts with equality.[7] Equality means everyone is ruler and being ruled in turn. Hence no one is simply subject to[8] anyone else, because the other is also subject to you; hence everyone lives as one likes. In other words, whether you start from the equality angle, then you arrive at freedom; and if you start from the freedom angle, you arrive at equality, so you cannot strictly speak of priority. Nevertheless, it is important that the key word is freedom and not equality. That is important. Can we understand that, why freedom is the preferred term and not equality?

Mr. Reinken: Then we'd all be equally deluded.

LS: . . . Yes, I think you pointed in the right direction. But is it not remarkable that most books which are written on broad themes deal with freedom, liberty rather than with equality? Ya?

Student: . . . equality side of this . . . ruled by everyone . . . then take it from the side of freedom . . .

LS: Ya, freedom seems to have an appeal which equality has only derivatively. Well, I mentioned on a former occasion that there is one very simple difference between classical thought and modern thought, for in classical thinking, and I mean not only in philosophers but in ordinary popular thinking, all claims to rule were based on superiority, on a superiority. Freedom is a superiority: not everyone is free. That everyone is not equal is clear, [that] was never denied; but equality means rather [that] everyone ought to be treated equally. You know, that is not a primary goal. Equality is a consequence, you can say, from justice. But the trouble with us is that we are less concerned with justice than with some amoral good, if I may so, as freedom is. Therefore freedom is the more attractive thing. We may say [that] justice reminds us of our duties;

freedom reminds us of something which we naturally like. One would have to go into that much more deeply, but the fact is that the key word—not only here in Aristotle but also in other references to classical democracy—is freedom, not equality. It was always understood that there is, that equality comes in, but it is not the guiding consideration. Mr. Kendrick?

Mr. Kendrick: Well, freedom implies the wherewithal to maintain it. American . . .

LS: Yes, it is understood that—although it is not said here, that it is understood [that] not all men deserve to be free because that is the only way in which you can defend the institution of slavery. And slavery is somehow taken for granted here. Not everyone is a free man; to be a free man is a distinction. To be a human being without qualification is no distinction. Everyone is a human being, and if you make the distinction or write some are very incomplete human beings, they are babies—well, they don't count politically anyway and so we can disregard them. The more interesting case would be that of women. But that unfortunately, earlier political people, not only the philosophers, took for granted, that well that—Plato is one of the major exceptions, you know—well, women don't count, I am sorry to say, politically. So was this an answer to your question, Mr. Kendrick?

Mr. Kendrick: . . . that I had in mind that something different was implied in the modern notion.

LS: Yes, sure.

Mr. Kendrick: That the ground of . . . any conventional freedom.

LS: No, you—I mean, extremely stated you could perhaps say this: for modern men, it is not absurd to say that a defect may be the ground for a right. Ya? For example, people who are suffering particularly, say, for economic reasons, should, because they suffer, have political rights to redress the balance. That's a perfectly defensible statement; in modern times, it was frequently made. But here it is a defect which is a basis of rights. That was, one could say, unthinkable to the older people. A right must be based on a virtue, or in other words, a right is a privilege. A right is a privilege; there are no rights simply. You know, when we speak of rights, the rights of man that are meant to belong to every man by virtue of the fact that he is a human being, that doesn't exist here. That doesn't exist here. And therefore one could say every right is a privilege. And therefore demands that you show cause why you should have the right, that may be very little, meaning that you just are a descendant from a citizen father and a citizen mother, which is no particular merit; but still it is something which not all people have.

Now as for the difference between the modern and the classical notion of freedom, that we take up later. I must add one point. Still, while freedom has somehow an edge here, it is equally clear that both freedom and equality are inseparable expressions of the same, of the same thing called democracy. Yet Aristotle adds here, and this will come out later more clearly, still there is another element which is at least equally important apart from

freedom and equality, and that is that democracy is the rule of the poor. That you could not immediately deduce from freedom and equality without looking again at democracy.[9] Looking again means [to] proceed empirically.[10] You don't have here an *a priori* construction for democracies. Freedom and equality is freedom and equality of the poor—of course also of the rich, and we will come to that later, but practically, surely the preponderance of the poor. And this implies in a way Aristotle's criticism[11]—and this criticism is alluded to at any rate here. When Aristotle speaks here of equality, he says numerical equality; they don't consider proportionate equality, i.e., the equality of which the democrats speak is not true equality, only a part of—well, it is not entirely wrong. That is only half of the story. What about freedom, democratic freedom? What would Aristotle say? We can infer that from the parallel of equality. Is the freedom of which the democrats speak true freedom in Aristotle's point of view?

Student: No, obviously not, because these, the democrat may . . . without a rudder, without any direction.

LS: In other words, to live as one likes is not a reasonable end. So Aristotle would have to say true freedom is not—the end of which he speaks is something different. And this true freedom would be what in Aristotle? To live as one likes?

Student: No, to live a life oriented toward the attainment of the good life.

LS: Ya, to live virtuously. To live virtuously. Sure. That would be the simple objection of Aristotle there. Now let us consider that a bit more carefully, because I think that is worth our while. To live as one likes, to do as one likes, is of course literally impossible. I mean, try to do it literally and you will get hurt, i.e., you will get what you do not like. So therefore we must understand it, to live as one likes, with a matter of course qualification, namely, to live as one likes without hurting others. That's always understood. Oh, ya, but that again is very vague. Because as you doubtless know from the literature, if not from experience, there are people who are very easily hurt, and you cannot live with them without hurting them. So we must have a more precise definition of what hurting is. The vanity of others, where people are frequently hurt, is of course absolutely uninteresting because that is bound to be hurt all the time. So without hurting others in their serious substantive interests. Now which are they, which are these substantive interests which we have in mind when we speak to live as one likes with the necessary qualification, without hurting others? They are not far-fetched. Mr. Denny, yes? You seem to have an idea.

Mr. Denny: I'd say life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—

LS: Yes, that is not–

Mr. Denny: or something of this sort.

LS: No. Yes, what I suggest is a somewhat more old-fashioned enumeration: life and limb; property. People are hurt if you steal, you know, or burglarize them or something of this kind. Honor of women. Ya? That was Machiavelli's enumeration, and he was in such

matters of very great soundness and clarity. All right, then we know then what it means to live as one likes—ya, surely, but you must not interfere with other people's life, property, and honor of the women.

But precisely from Machiavelli we learn that this can be obtained under a tyranny. There is no direct link it seems between these simple demands and politics. But what would one say against this proposition that you can have them under any regime, that's not characteristically democratic? Well, under a tyrant, to takes the simplest case, you have them only precariously, if the tyrant happens to be a sensible man and does not happen to be under very great pressure to interfere with life and property. So this wholly nonpolitical interest in itself, in living as one likes, necessarily turns into a political interest. If you think a bit about it, what you want with these very modest demands, you must become politically interested. So you demand therefore political rights because you say without them you are not sufficiently sure that your life, liberty, and honor of your women is taken care of. The political rights. But what kind of political rights, because there is also a variety there?

Now here we must start from the simple fact equally obvious to Aristotle as to Machiavelli, that we have in every society the basic distinction between the rich and the poor. Let us use these old-fashioned but clear expressions. Now there are great differences. The rich and poor both want life, property, and honor of women, but still, it is not quite the same politically how the rich mean that and how the poor mean that. What do the poor want as poor? I mean, all want these three things, but what do the poor as poor want and the rich as rich want? That is decisive. Aristotle suggests this—we can perhaps, let us turn to a passage which we have not considered last time, 1308b, towards the end. 1308b33 following. Ya. This was one, was particularly—in oligarchies.

Mr. Reinken:
The many[iv] are not so greatly offended at being excluded from office (they may even be glad to be given the leisure for attending to their own business); what really annoys them is to think that those who have the enjoyment of office are embezzling public funds. That makes them feel a double annoyance at a double loss, the loss of profit as well as office. If an arrangement could be made to stop men from using office as a means of private gain, it would provide a way—the only possible way—of combining democracy with aristocracy. Both the notables and the many could then get what they desire. The right to hold office would be open to all, as befits a democracy: The notables would actually be in office, as befits an aristocracy. Both results could be achieved simultaneously if the use of office as a means of profit were made impossible. The poor would no longer desire to hold office (because they would derive no advantage from doing so), and they would prefer to attend to their own affairs. The rich would be able to afford to take office, as they would need no subvention from public funds to meet its expenses. The poor would thus have the advantage of becoming wealthy by diligent attention to work; the notables would enjoy the consolation of not being governed by any chance comer. (1308b34-a9)

[iv] In Barker: "the masses"

LS: This is enough. Thank you. So in other words, Aristotle distinguishes here, in a way which is not radically different from Machiavelli later on, [between] the demands of the poor and the demands of the rich. To repeat, both want life, property, and honor. Honor—I mean, honor of women, but not only that; they don't want to be insulted, naturally, that's also a part of honor. That's clear. But there is a difference: the poor must work. Very much. [They] must attend to their work because they are poor. The rich do not have to attend to it to the same degree, at any rate. And that switches, as you see, in Aristotle's usage here (not always, but here) into "the better people." The better people want to be recognized as the better people, i.e., they don't want to be ruled by the poor. And here you have a beautiful arrangement: the poor, say, have the right to vote, or the equivalent of the right to vote. There are electors, but in fact [the] eligible are only the better people. Everyone gets what he wants. That is a good setup: each section gets what he wants; no one is oppressed because everyone gets what he wants. There is of course a certain part of the populace which is oppressed, and these are the slaves, but that is somehow taken for granted. That is taken for granted. Xenophon puts it somewhere this way: that the citizens mutually protect one another, by arms of course, against foreign enemies and against the slaves.[v] That is part of the situation; that is not discussed here.

All right, we then have a solution which seems to be perfectly workable that's underlying the discussion of Aristotle. But we need something more. Is it sufficient if we have such an arrangement? Or rather are there not certain implications which we have forgotten and which must be necessarily present if this is to work? Now you remember the discussion of education last time. In every regime, there must be an education to the end of the regime. This free society—if we disregard the slaves—[where] no one is oppressed [and] everyone gets what he wants, requires dedication to freedom. And this dedication to freedom does not merely come from enjoyment of freedom; something has to be done for that, and that is the importance of education. And we need also something else apart from that dedication to freedom. We need something else: vigilance, as you call it. Because that vigilance is inspired by dedication. We need certain qualities, especially of the men in ruling offices. These men must not merely be rich; at least some of them must have some other qualities: virtues. You remember that discussion last time. That would seem to be a perfectly satisfactory solution, except for the slaves. But that is something which Aristotle has in a way taken care of in book 1, but only very insufficiently because these slaves there, as you may recall, would be no good; I mean, they would be much too dumb to be of any use. That is a major difficulty for Aristotle, which I think he simply accepted as inevitable; then he had to get some slaves who were not so dumb, and therefore ought not to be slaves. That's one of the most massive difficulties of Aristotle's *Politics*.

So this we must never forget, but that is of course not the only point. Why is Aristotle not satisfied with that solution? Why, you have everything here, what a sensible man could expect—I mean, disregarding slavery, but everyone, almost every one of Aristotle's political contemporaries would have granted him that. There were some individuals[12] who thought of a society without slaves—Plato is the most famous man, in the *Republic*, but the political people took that for granted. Why is Aristotle not satisfied with that? [This is] a question which I have raised on a former occasion. Why is that not enough for

[v] Cf. Xenophon, *Hiero*, 4.3.

him? Well, everything is all right except how we understand virtue here. That's the little thing with which Aristotle is not satisfied. And why? Why is he not satisfied with such a setup as described? This question will return again. You see, the strange surprise, that in books 7 and 8 he will give us a polity, he will give us a regime which is not democratic, it is not even a polity—you remember this distinction—but an aristocracy, is a consequence of that. Well, in a word, virtue here is understood, in this scheme as I have stated it, as instrumental. Virtue is here understood only as a means for the end of preserving the city, and more particularly the freedom of the city. Virtue is not understood as choiceworthy for its own sake. That is the only objection. I mean, up to this point, up to the point where we raised the question regarding virtue, there is perfect agreement between Aristotle and Machiavelli in his better mood, let me say.[13] Machiavelli develops such a scheme very clearly in his *Discourses on Livy*, so Machiavelli doubtless favored that. One could of course say, although that is a very long question, that Aristotle would say this: once you begin to understand virtue as instrumental for preserving the freedom of the city, then you have to swallow the whole Machiavelli; then morality as a whole is a means for a social end, and then society may require—you can't know that without some experience—may require very tough things, or seem to require [them]. That's the point, and that's what Machiavelli says. Therefore Machiavelli proves then very beautifully that just humanity is, for example, surely conducive to a free society. Ya, but not in war, and not in a critical domestic situation; there you have to be very tough. Machiavelli, who doesn't mince words, says you have to be cruel. So in other words, we must not forget this crucial implication: once we begin with this proclivity and understand morality as instrumental, we can't know where we will end. That is the difficulty here.

Now let me state the problem of freedom as it appears from Aristotle's point of view as follows. Freedom is presented as the end of democracy. And there of course, in this respect, nothing has changed. Freedom is still the key to have democracy. But Aristotle's view can be stated as follows: freedom as freedom cannot be the end. Because to use one's freedom, to exercise one's freedom—and freedom is always exercised *for* something—the end is that for which freedom is used. For example, you could say: Well, all right, let the end be abundance of wealth. Everyone should be free so that he can lead a life of abundance, which requires some other things apart from political freedom, but all right. But the difficulty is the same, because abundance too can never be the end for a thoughtful human being. It is again only a means. Of course, modern democratic theory on the somewhat higher level knows that, and therefore[14] they would have a name for that end, which is neither freedom as freedom as hitherto understood nor wealth and abundance. What is the most common answer given now for that end for which freedom is needed and which justifies, not to say sanctifies, freedom?

Student: Development of individual capabilities?

LS: Ya. Something—I believe it is now more popular to speak of self-realization. Self-realization. All right, self-realization. For this reason, we may need some abundance and we surely need political freedom. All right. But what does self-realization mean?

Student: . . .

LS: Pardon? Do I not realize myself by *any* action? By any action, in any way? Sooner or later one is compelled to make a distinction between the true self and the apparent self. So Mr. X acts on some occasions in a way which is not the realization of his self, but only on some other occasions. And the simplest form, to make this clear,[15] is to make a distinction between the true self and the spurious self. Expressed in a more old-fashioned way, the implication is [that] to be good means to be oneself or to be self-determined. If I determine myself, i.e., if I am not other-directed, if I do not follow opinions or keep up with the Joneses and this kind of thing—if I really determine myself, if I *am* myself, then I am good. Aristotle would say: Yes, that one can say, but it is a bit confusing. Why don't you speak of virtue? In other words,[16] instead of defining virtue in terms of the self, why do you not define the self in terms of virtue?[17] Aristotelian virtue can be said to be self-determination. You do the right thing because you see, *you see* that it is right. You determine yourself in that.

But Aristotle would say that that is very exacting and it is very unfair to expect this from everyone, that he be virtuous in this sense. Virtue is self-determination on the highest level. But a man can be a naturally decent man without determining himself, by simply following decent customs, for example. You remember the discussion of the good man and the good citizen in book 3: the good man is identical with the good citizen in the best regime in the act of ruling. Those who do not rule cannot or do not have self-determination. They are virtuous in the act of obeying commands which they do not necessarily fully understand. But the question with which we are concerned is to get a better understanding or a more precise understanding of the difference between the Aristotelian notion of the ends or of freedom and the modern notion. That would lead us very far because our present notion of freedom according to which it means self-determination or self-realization belongs to a very complicated development of modern thought. This notion emerged in connection with Rousseau and Kant, you know, and that is a very complicated story.

Let us return—and we cannot start from that, that's too complicated. Let us start from the simpler way, from the letter, for example, written by Locke[vi] —because that would be a constant incitement to manslaughter, naturally, and therefore there must be protection of honor too. So that Aristotle was familiar with that, with such a limited notion of the function of civil society. And we know Aristotle's objection to that. In order to understand the difference we would have to consider the difference not between Aristotle and Locke, which would be easy to do, but the difference between Aristotle's contemporaries who had a quasi-Lockean view and, say, Locke, or Hobbes, or whoever else you might take. Is this clear? The problem is really a very simple one, of course, across which you come every time you think about these matters, but I may have stated it in an awkward way, and therefore I would be grateful if someone would save me from my own predicament. Do you see what I am driving at? Our question is to understand the difference between the classics, the classical view proper, say, the Aristotelian view and the modern view. That's clear. [LS writes on the blackboard] And let us take as representative of the classics, Aristotle, and [of] the moderns, Locke. A perfectly

[vi] The tape was changed at this point.

defensible procedure, to limit oneself to these two men, because of their unusually great influence. That is clear. Virtue—property. Simple formula. The end of civil society is to make man good, virtuous: Aristotle. [For Locke] the end of civil society is to protect property, it's as easy as that. At a first reading of Aristotle, Locke shows you that. Yes?

Student: Is this small discussion of what the, what the final end of the democratic state is, when we're saying that the state's end is freedom. But then you have to go further, virtue.

LS: Ya, sure. But you are quite right. It is not—so let us make it quite clear. Ancient democracy. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Modern democracy. That's our beginnning. And now in order to clarify that, we have to[18] proceed in this way: that we understand first the difference between ancient and modern thought as such before we apply to the democracy. And then we start: Aristotle, Locke. Simplest procedure. I . . . recommend it, for whenever you want to go into that. So that's clear. In Locke, virtue comes in instrumentally. If you are to protect property, you must have civil society, you must be lawabiding . . . you must be virtuous in a restricted sense; you must be honest. Honesty is the best policy . . . For Aristotle virtue means much more: human excellence.

Good. Now can we not say, and one must say: Yes, but Aristotle was one school, the most, the genteel tradition, some people call it, but there were more tough-minded fellows, who had a view very close to that of Locke. Aristotle refers to the sophist Lycophron. Lycophron, in the third book, [vii] you must remember when he gives a sketch.[19] Lycophron is a sophist. [LS writes on the blackboard.] In order to recognize a very familiar problem, I only . . . the sophists; that is a loose expression but sufficient for our present purpose. In other words, did not the sophists develop a Lockean doctrine? To some extent they did, and to that extent Aristotle was familiar with that. But still, there is a subtle difference between the sophists and Locke, which is crucial if we want to understand modern thought in general and modern democracy in particular.

Now how is that? I mean, if he takes a crude formula, which you will find in the textbooks since about a hundred, hundred fifty years—well, there were no textbooks of this kind before, so—. What is, according to the sophists, the end of man? Surely not virtue, or taken by the popular view, surely not virtue. But what? There are some among you who have read the first book of Plato's *Republic*.

Student: . . . great success.

LS: Success. Ya, but still success in—one must proceed Socratically—success in tightrope dancing, success in passing the prelim examination,[viii] or what?

Student: Knowledge?

[vii] 1280b10-11.

[viii] The preliminary examination was required of graduate students, "preliminary" meaning preliminary to presenting a dissertation proposal.

LS: Ya, I mean**,** according to this ordinary—I am speaking now of the ordinary interpretation . . . wouldn't say knowledge.

Different Student: Power?

LS: Yes, power, one can say. But let us break it down to make it quite simple: wealth and honor. Wealth and honor. Thrasymachus wants to get money, you know, and he wants to get prestige; Protagoras and the others too, surely. In other words, these people presuppose an end which is in no way subjective. All men, they as it were say, if they were only honest, or if they are not fooled by traditions, or by laws, want wealth and honor. And the more and the faster, the better, naturally. Now what does Locke say about that? In other words, I mean, if we take this crude view for a moment, of the sophists, then it is perfectly true: they say the end of man, the happiness of man was simply to be rich and looked up to, and they believe they can do it in a way better than tyrants can. That is a special thesis of the sophists, you can say. This is where knowledge comes in. You know? Because somehow people look up more to knowledge, paradoxical as it may sound, than to mere physical power of coercion. Now where does Locke come in? Where does Locke come in? What does Locke say? Protection of property, that means of course more the protection of those who have property than of those who have no property; that should be clear. And Locke means the protection of the increase in property, not only of static property. If you read chapter 5 of the *Second Treatise*, you will see that.[ix] So all right, there is perhaps less emphasis on prestige and such silly things in Locke, but on the tough thing, well, there is a very great emphasis. What's the difference?

Mr. Reinken: He's assuming that everybody is out to get him . . .

LS: No. They are despicable people. Who cares about that. Who cares about that really, the real guys. Sure, there are always some jerks, many jerks, and they are naturally ruled and ought to be ruled; that's simple for those people. Yes?

Student: A change in . . . is assumed by Locke . . .

LS: A change in wealth? What do you mean?

Same Student: A change in amount of wealth, or else in the distribution of wealth.

LS: Sure, but did Locke really believe that it is a function of government to bring about a fairer distribution of property?

Student: No.

LS: So that won't do.[20] That's not the point—compared with these sophists, or rather with this modern image of the sophists of course much more reflected. And he would absolutely agree with Plato and Aristotle, who would say there are some people who are truly only concerned with amassing wealth, but these are very rare. Most of the people

---

[ix] See especially section 41 ff.

want to have wealth and conceive it as a means for an end, ya? So wealth is not the end. What's the end? The end Locke calls, as everyone did, happiness. But what about happiness? Yes?

Student: . . .

LS: Absolutely. Happiness—in other words, the end is subjective. And therefore you have to find out, you cannot build a political society on ends which differ from individual to individual. That is simply—that's impossible. And how will you find then an end which can be made the end of civil society, given the subjectivity of the ultimate end?

Student: Conditions.

LS: Conditions of happiness. And the conditions of happiness, they can be stated: life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, or however you please. You can also include property. Therefore that is the great difference; therefore the doctrine of Locke is so much more a thought-out political doctrine than what we know of this so-called sophistic doctrine, surely. And this doctrine as developed classically by Locke came into certain difficulties because he did not make sufficient provision for the proper distribution of wealth, if I may say so. Locke somehow assumed that the rich are those who deserve to be rich and the poor are those who deserve to be poor. The rational people will become well off, and those who are ill off are the, how does he call them, the lazy and irrational part of mankind.[x] Well, who would—I mean, that would be a perfectly just order. Then later on certain difficulties developed on that ground, difficulties with which you all are familiar and which led to the rejection of Locke. You know, today he is only a historical figure for this reason.

I am now concerned with this: this notion that you can find the end, the end of civil society in objective means for these subjective ends, that has broken down today. And why? Is this not a perfectly plausible and sensible assertion: the ends may differ as much as they please, but you surely need life, liberty, and property to pursue any ends, and therefore that's the function of civil society. I mean, how does it appear from today from present-day social science point of view?

Student: The end, the means, law, is not seen as objective.

LS: I don't get you.

Different Student: As I understand it, Locke's notion is that civil society regards the objective means for subjective ends—

LS: Oh, that is, that is hardly . . . Positive law doesn't have to be so objective. But the main point is that you get an objective foundation for the subjectivity of the law, if I may

---

[x] God gave the world "to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it); not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious." *Second Treatise*, sec. 34.

so. Do you know what I mean? That you show the necessity of law,[21] for positive law, and whether the law is particularly influenced by digestive disturbances of some Supreme Court Justice or whatever it may be, that is a secondary consideration from a broader point of view. No, no, the point is this. If happiness—I mean, I try to restate the objection of present-day social science to Locke: if happiness is truly subjective, radically subjective, if no holds are barred, then you have to admit the possibility that someone understands by happiness otherworldly bliss. Now for otherworldly bliss, life, liberty, and property are not required so obviously as they are required for this-worldly bliss. That's it. In other words, what I am driving at is only this: the older doctrine was fundamentally a secularistic doctrine. Whatever Locke privately might have thought about it is uninteresting as far as his doctrine goes, but[22] paradoxical as it may sound, the actual progress of secularism in the nineteenth, twentieth century has been accompanied by a doubt, a theoretical doubt of that secularism; and that makes the whole secularism doubtful theoretically. If you think that I exaggerate, I ask you only to read Max Weber, where you will see the decisive argument is always based on this: there is a this-world morality and an other-worldly morality, and this controversy cannot be settled by human reason.[xi] There we are. Therefore social science cannot be objective. Max Weber did not use these silly things that they say, you know the vulgar relativist who says that's my value, and that's your value, that is about whether you like blondes or brunettes better—that is of course, a wholly stupid form of relativism. But that is, I think, a part of the problem. Ya, all right. But we have not gone deep enough into that issue.

Now let me start therefore from a somewhat different angle.[23] The basic stratum of modern political thought for which I use John Locke as the most convenient representative is distinguished from the so-called sophists by one simple fact. Everyone who has ever heard of Locke—you don't even have to read it—knows that Locke talks about natural law, about natural right. Now what did the sophists, the so-called sophists say about natural law and natural right? I take again this wider simplistic version of what the sophists thought. What do they say? They reject natural law. They reject it. Natural law comes much more from people—although it is not strictly speaking Aristotelian, comes much closer to Aristotle than it is to the sophists. So from this point of view, the modern thought appears to be somewhere in between Aristotle and the sophists. But that is all still very vague. Now let me try to dig a little bit deeper, and here I have to refer to this more subtle point which was made by this young man here. I forgot your name.

Student: . . .

LS: It really won't do to reduce the sophists to that crude level, honor and wealth, as a motivation. The very name indicates that they were very much concerned with wisdom. *Sophistai* has something to do with *sophia*, wisdom. I mean, that may have entirely spurious wisdom, that's not the point, but they had a high regard for wisdom, for cleverness, for wisdom for its own sake. That is the reason why Socrates always gets the better of them in this particular way. You see they cannot—for example, Thrasymachus wants money, and he also wants to be a man who possesses an art, i.e., knowledge, and[24]

[xi] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster, 1968); cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History,* 78.

that is ultimately the reason why Socrates gets the better of him, you see, because he must protect the integrity of his art as an art, and there is a conflict between that and his simple vulgar self-interest. Good. But there is something more to that, and that is something which shines through the vulgar tyrannical teaching of people like Thrasymachus as presented by Plato,[xii] and that is this: the interest of the individual, the individual as individual, be it wealth and prestige or be it knowledge (that does not make a difference here) is not simply in harmony with the social interests. The case can be made, the trivial case that whatever you want, you are likely to get it in society rather than if you live in the desert. That's easy. But that does not mean that you get it best by transforming yourself completely into a citizen. In other words, you can, by being a member of civil society, regard civil society as a means for your end. Now that is exactly what the tyrant does. You can't be a tyrant in a desert; the tyrant must believe in civil society. Ya, but he regards civil society as something to exploit for his purposes. Now not only tyrants can do that, very humble people can do that. The question is, therefore, and that comes out in all the famous immoralities of the sophists: Is not a merely external compliance with civil society sufficient? Is it not so that ultimately there is a disharmony between the individual and society? On the highest level, and the only level of ultimate interest, is the relation of the interest of the man of knowledge, the philosopher, and civil society, i.e., is there a fundamental harmony between philosophy and the *polis*? And here we can say the ancient thinkers, high or relatively low, all believed that there is no such harmony. The modern thinkers, with a slight exaggeration—for example, Locke—believe in such a harmony. That I think is[25] the clearest difference which we will find. And therefore a man like Locke can believe that his political scheme can be simply satisfactory. The individual is in every respect better off—in every respect—by being a member of civil society.

The difficulty came out only after Locke for one moment, so to speak, in Rousseau. Rousseau reasserted the old thesis that there is a conflict, a tension between the individual and society, an insoluble tension; and therefore Rousseau is at the same time the originator of something which you could call totalitarianism of society—not what we have now, totalitarianism of government, but totalitarianism of society—and of anarchism. This famous and notorious fact is no accident follows from the tension in Rousseau's teaching itself. Rousseau is in this respect a kind of anarchism you can say. That I believe has very much to do with that, for the following reason: because if there is a disproportion between philosophy and the *polis*, this is a fundamentally non-democratic assertion, the highest activity of man, thinking, transcends the *polis*. But if there is a fundamental harmony between philosophy and the *polis*, that can only be achieved if philosophy is radically in the service of the ends of the *polis*. And that is a modern view. For example, if the end of philosophy or science is the relief of man's estate, as Bacon said and Locke of course repeats, there is perfect harmony between the interest of society and[26] philosophy itself. But if the end of philosophy should not be[27] in itself a social end, then a difficulty arises. I think that would ultimately come out. But of course I have to disregard quite a few very important points, and if you would like me to clear up, if I can, one of these many points which I have as it were to swallow, I should be glad do so. Mr. Reinken?

[xii] In *Republic*, book 1.

Mr. Reinken: You said something about possibly returning to the real difficulties of the polity . . .

LS: Ya, no that would not be really relevant to that, except in this way: I think that Aristotle's *Politics* can only be understood if one understands this problem of the complicated relation between philosophy and the *polis*. From a purely political point of view, the democracy, the better kind of democracy, the best kind of democracy, or the polity would be perfectly satisfactory. You remember perhaps the discussion in book 3, when he described a reasonable democracy. That's perfectly satisfactory, I mean, for everyone. And then he brings in this strange king, who—I mean, this superman who doesn't need laws and who rules in the way the whole and doesn't need a polity. Remember that? If one would analyze that through, one would discern behind that king the philosopher. One could also show it in another way: What is that noninstrumental virtue which is not provided for by the political scheme I have sketched before? What is that? Ultimately it will come out, and that is invariably simple to do in Aristotle's case, that this noninstrumental virtue is contemplation. Moral virtue[28] as Aristotle understands it somehow points to contemplation as to its completion. But there is a passage to which we will turn very shortly in which this problem comes up; now I suggest that we turn now to where we left off, in 1317b17.

Mr. Reinken:
Such being the idea of democracy, and the root from which it develops, we can now proceed to study its attributes or institutions. There is the election of officers *by* all, and *from* all; there is the system of all ruling over each, and each, in his turn, over all; there is the method of appointment by lot to all offices—or, at any rate, to all which do not require some practical experience and professional skill; there is the rule that there should be no property qualification for office—or, at any rate, the lowest possible; there is the rule that— (1317b17-23)

LS: Now may I make a remark on this last point. That's interesting, a very small property qualification would not make a regime nondemocratic according to Aristotle. That I think has a certain consequence for the understanding of the American polity, because the only change politically in the narrow sense which has taken place was the abolition of the small property qualifications in some states which existed at the beginning. That is not of a basic importance. In other words, must one not start from the premise in understanding American phenomena that this country was from the very beginning not only a republic, no one denies, but a democracynd? And that would show the difference from Britain from the very beginning as very, very powerful—you remember some people tried to show that nothing changed except that the king was replaced by an elected first magistrate, or this kind of thing. But I think it will doubtless contribute to greater clarity if one starts from the fact that this country was from the very beginning a democratic country and not, as Britain surely was for a very long time, throughout the nineteenth century even, an oligarchic country. I mean, how one has to understand such things as what Jackson did, or especially the New Deal, these would probably be only quantitative and not qualitative differences. But the crucial point is, of course—and here Aristotle is also very helpful—the change from an agrarian *dēmos* to an urban *dēmos*, an industrial

dēmos, that would be indeed of the utmost importance. Then we can leave it at these points.

A little bit later, towards the end of 1317b,[29] he enumerates here nine different points, and then he says "since oligarchy is defined by birth, wealth, and culture," I suppose he translates, "the democratic things are thought to be the opposites of these: low birth, poverty, and lack of culture." You have that. That belongs also . . . But you see the important [point is that] Aristotle uses here a qualifier "is thought to be"; he does not simply identify himself with it because he does not accept the basic premise of the oligarchs that the rich are the better people. So Aristotle sometimes uses that equation and sometimes he does not. But in strict language, he always distinguishes, of course. Now let us go on a little bit later, 1318a, where he says the common features of the democracies are these. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
These are the attributes common to democracies generally. But if we look at the form of democracy and the sort of populace which is generally held to be specially typical, we have to connect it with the conception of justice which is the recognized democratic conception—that of equality of rights for all on an arithmetical basis. Equality here *might* be taken to mean that the poorer class should exercise no greater authority than the rich—(1318a4-7)

LS: The opposite, that the rich should not rule, that is the text here . . . the rich should not rule to a higher degree than the poor. Yes? Nor should the rich alone be authoritative.

Mr. Reinken:
or, in other words, that sovereignty should not be exercised only by it, but equally vested in all the citizens on a numerical basis. (1318a7-9)

LS: Ya, in this, ya, next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
If that were the interpretation followed, the upholders of democracy could afford to believe that equality—and liberty—was really achieved by their constitution. (1318a9-10)

LS: Not the opponents of democracy; that is a wrong addition of Barker, in my opinion. Now what is the meaning of this in the somewhat complicated discussion which follows? If someone would say today democracy is[30] rule of the poor, he would be laughed out of court. What authority does he have for that? Democracy is the rule of all. Ya? That's clear. That is the point which Aristotle has here in mind. The democrats do not say: Rights only for the poor. That happens only in very extreme risings. The democrats—the established democracy never says that. They say equal rights for all; hence also for the rich. They know somehow that there must be rich people, and the reason is easy to understand: they don't want to close to themselves the avenue to wealth, nor to their children. But if they want to—what Aristotle turns this against the democracy: if you

want to really have equality for all, i.e., if you want to preserve the rich, then you must modify democracy correspondingly. In other words, you must make it possible that the rich as rich can survive with a legal security, and the only way is to give them a higher voting power. And that he describes in the sequel in a very complicated discussion. Let us say this: if the rich were to have a much higher vote, say, four times the voting power, each rich man as the poor—you must not forget that the rich men were not millionaires and the poor were not paupers; I mean, the difference, the spread was not as large. If you say the rich are one fourth of the population, of the political population, of the electors, then if you give a rich man four times the voting power of the poor man, then you have equality for the rich. That's roughly what Aristotle suggests. But this is only suggested here. That is one of the difficulties of the book, the many suggestions not followed up. Aristotle turns then to the democracies. And the democracy is of course not a regime which gives different voting powers to different people, it gives the same voting power to all. It must have other means for protecting the rich in their wealth. Now let us begin there in 1318b, at the beginning. At b6, when he speaks of there being four—

Mr. Reinken:
Of the four varieties of democracy the best, as has already been noted in the previous section of our inquiry, is the one that comes first in the order of classification. It is also the oldest of all— (1318b5-8)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. The best democracy is the oldest. Now this leads to a very great difficulty, namely,[31] for Aristotle, writing in a late date, that's no longer possible, and he has to find a[32] solution of the problem on the basis of the latest, i.e., the worst kind of democracy. That he will do later. But I mention here only one point. The politically best democracy is the oldest. The simply best regime, the divine regime, kingship,[33] is still older than the oldest democracy. And you have then this situation: that what is politically best is early; what is intellectually best, wisdom, is late. That is what I call the disproportion between science and society. You cannot have the best society at the same time at which you have the highest development of the intellect. That I think is also the basic notion of Thucydides's *History*. Sparta is superior to Athens politically from Thucydides's point of view, but Athens is obviously superior to Sparta intellectually. Thucydides doesn't say anything about that, but he shows it by deed;[34] at the beginning he says "Thucydides from Athens,"[xiii] so the man who understood the political things was not a Spartan but came from a very less satisfactory political society from his own point of view, namely, from Athens. That I think is generally true on the highest level of classical thought.

Now then Aristotle develops in the sequel the characteristics of the best democracy and that is a peasant's democracy. The peasants. "Farmers" is so misleading because there is a different—you have farmers in this country too, but you don't have peasants. And I think even in Britain they deny that they have peasants, they have farmers. Peasants you have on the European continent, and of course in Asia and in other places.[35] Now why is the peasantry so good? Why is the peasant democracy the best? They were all small property owners and therefore they have an interest in the preservation of property. Yes?

[xiii] The opening words of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

Student: Is there a certain emphasis on the value of the ownership of tangible property, particularly land, throughout Aristotle?

LS: You mean as distinguished from what? A house? That's also tangible property.

Student: Distinguished form the ownership of a skill.

LS: I see. Now Aristotle reflects on that. What is, why does he prefer the peasantry to artisans?

Same Student: Well, he thinks the peasants—well, the artisans don't have the excellences which the peasants have. Now one of the reasons for this is that the peasants are in the city.

LS: Artisans—

Same Student: The artisans are in the city.

LS: Ya, well of course that was the general argument developed at greater length by Xenophon in his *Oeconomicus*, that the soldiers, the best soldiers are the peasants.[xiv] And that was, as far as I know, the universal opinion until the First World War. There it became doubtful for the first time. And that is of course a very important military consideration: you must give political power to those who fight. That was one point. The other point which he mentions, why they are politically useful, they can't aggregate as easily as urban people can; you know, they live in different [circumstances], they live in some isolation even if they live in villages, and that is also a stabilizing factor. Yes?

Same Student: My point was that, doesn't the fact that they have something that can be taken away from them, make them more a moderating, or conservative influence on political—

LS: Ya, but you, then you can take in other considerations which Aristotle does not make but which have been made more than once since, the dependence of the peasants on the elements is much greater than that of urban artisans, therefore they are more aware of the limitations of human power; whereas art easily engenders a pride of competence and that also would contribute to make them better subjects. Ya? And so on and so on. Surely. No, no, that is clear, and in an indirect way it would be very interesting to compare Aristotle's analysis of the peasantry with Marx's. Because, as you know, for Marx it was the greatest problem: How could the bourgeoisie or other oppressing classes oppress the very numerous proletariat? Obviously because there was a much more numerous peasantry. And that is the problem which Marx elaborates regarding, for example, Napoleon, both the first and the third: it was a victory of the peasantry over the urban workers.[36] And they never succeeded at that, to win over the peasants; and only in Russia they had for one moment the golden opportunity of getting the peasants because the peasants were

---

[xiv] *Oeconomicus* 21.

tired of the war. And you know after that they were caught, and that is a kind of indirect comment on Aristotle.[37]

---

[1] Deleted “we have to”
[2] Deleted “what Barker”
[3] Deleted “now let us”
[4] Deleted “not”
[5] Deleted “which means”
[6] Deleted “in a”
[7] Deleted “everyone and”
[8] Deleted “anybody”
[9] Deleted “it could”
[10] Deleted “you cannot have”
[11] Deleted “Aristotle”
[12] Deleted “who were”
[13] Deleted “you know, you know there is a”
[14] Deleted “they would not say”
[15] Deleted “is to say”
[16] Deleted “why don’t you define”
[17] Deleted “virtue is, one can”
[18] Deleted “go in”
[19] Deleted “now I omit”
[20] Deleted “and if you say—I think that”
[21] Deleted “and then that’s”
[22] Deleted “this kind of”
[23] Deleted “the doctrine in this”
[24] Deleted “therefore he”
[25] Deleted “the most”
[26] Deleted “between”
[27] Deleted “a social”
[28] Deleted “does not”
[29] Deleted “he speaks”
[30] Deleted “rich”
[31] Deleted “I mean”
[32] Deleted “way of”
[33] Deleted “is also”
[34] Deleted “you only have to”
[35] Deleted “the peasantry is”
[36] Deleted “and the question was”
[37] Deleted “Now, I have—what is the time? Oh no, then we have to finish. Yes. No—then—pardon? I am sorry for—so I ask again, Mr. Grant is still not here.”

Session 14: no date
Regime change and Plato's Republic; monarchy (book 5)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —simple. People are elected to office—supposedly, according to the stated principle—on the basis of merit alone. But[1] since no one who was a poor man would have the time for that, it meant of course the relatively wealthy people were elected on the basis of money alone, whereas in an oligarchy proper, the property qualification as such was made explicit in the regime. In other words, it was said [that] he who owns less than that and that amount of property cannot be eligible . . . Now then Aristotle changes the distinction, the meaning of aristocracy, by saying: All right, aristocracy means rule on the basis of merit, it means rule of the virtuous man. And that leads to a strict notion of aristocracy as sketched at the end of book 3 and elaborated in books 7 and 8. In given cases, one may doubt: Does he speak of aristocracy severely understood, or does he mean what commonly is called aristocracy? But that is not an insoluble problem, because it becomes clear usually from the context, and I would say in these sections with which we are dealing now, the aristocracy mainly is always what is commonly meant by aristocracy.

Now connected with this is a fact that in certain discussions (we had an example last time) Aristotle switches, without drawing our attention explicitly to it, from the notables or respectable men to the rich. Now here again that's not the fault of Aristotle; that's the fault of political life. The better people happen to be the wealthier people. That is so up to the present day, and I imagine even in this country, in a democratic country. But still, nevertheless this vagueness connected even with a certain amount of hypocrisy of course is not entirely meaningless; it has at its bottom a very real distinction. For example, if you speak of the rich as rich strictly speaking, there is no possible exclusion of nonconvicted gangsters, to take a simpler example. Gangsters may be very rich people, as you will know from the same sources from which I know that. That is clear. But still, while everyone would count some gangsters among the rich people, no one would count them among the respectable people. That is clear. So the distinction is perfectly meaningful, and we apply it reasonably in everyday life; and Aristotle must not be prevented from doing in his political teaching what we do in ordinary political life.

But in a more sophisticated way, since the gangsters, one could rightly say, are more a matter for penal jurisdiction than for politics, it comes up within politics in the following way: What kind of wealth? Wealth how acquired? And there the old distinction between the landed interest and the moneyed interest comes in. So therefore an oligarchy in the strict sense does not make any distinction as to the source of wealth. The aristocracy does make such a distinction in favor of the landed interest. And you can, if you want to be very "quote cynical unquote," you can simply say: Well, these are the landed interest. But it is however strange that the landed interest and their representatives are still called in some more old-fashioned countries "the gentlemen." And that is what Aristotle repeats. Now Aristotle does not however slavishly reproduce the vulgar distinctions; behind this is a certain thought that these common political notions are justified to some extent. Agriculture, farming is a more human and more humane activity than trade and

commerce. And of course then one would have to go into that issue, and the fact that Aristotle holds this opinion doesn't prove it is true, but is thought out by him. Yes?

Student: In America today, wouldn't the essence of the Aristotelian distinctions, since farming is a relatively unimportant part of our economy, be between people who make their money and people who inherit it? I mean, I think you can make the case for inherited wealth producing more humane people, I mean if—take the Rockefellers, for example. [Laughter]

LS: Ya, of course, very—it is a very proper day, after the death of the father of . . . yesterday. [i] Yes, sure that is connected with it. But let me try to state it differently. Old wealth and new wealth; now that is a frequent experience, that people who have acquired their wealth right away have less nice manners than when there is old wealth. Well, you remember the beginning of the *Republic* where that is discussed. Old Cephalus, who comes from a wealthy family, he says to Socrates and then Socrates doesn't contradict it: That is generally speaking true, you know, that new wine goes more to the head than old wine. And you can even elaborate that and say: Well, what does old wealth mean?[2] It may mean that the family tradition is much more powerful than in other families. Think of the practical basis of family traditions: letters, pictures (we are speaking of today), they must be preserved. If people have become very poor, they cannot preserve these heirlooms. Now the presence of these reminders of the past of the family are very important for the formation of the young generation, obviously. They get a sense of dignity, these children, which they would not get without the physical presence of these things. Now if these families in addition played a certain role in the government of the *polis* in the past, the family tradition insensibly switches into a very pronounced political tradition. These are important facts and which have to be considered, and Aristotle of course is mindful of that. Yes?

Student: What is there in the situation which says that the inheritance will not be arrogance rather than dignity?

LS: A rather common experience. A rather common experience. But of course there is also such a thing which is called patrician insolence, ya? And that can be very bad. Surely, that can be. But still, do we not even today, apart from all changed views, and without making use of any hypocritical notions which Aristotle does not always dispel, do we not speak in a derogatory way of the parvenu?

Student: In a sense yes, a lack of manners, but lack of manners does not necessarily mean that he is not a good man even in the Aristotelian sense.

LS: Ya, sure; you can only replace parvenu by the self-made man[3] and say: What's wrong with the self-made man? Surely.[4] Very good. Then we have to go into a somewhat

---

[i] What Strauss said is not clear (he might have said Nelson Rockefeller), but what is clear that he was referring to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who died on May 10, 1960. Rockefeller was a son of John Rockefeller of Standard Oil, who left an enormous fortune which John D. Jr. used generously to philanthropic ends, including donations to the University of Chicago.

deeper stratum, namely, the whole question of stability versus mobility. Is not stability a more basic need of civil society than mobility?[5] I think we can say that at least the political thinkers in the past were generally of the opinion that stability is a more important consideration than mobility. I say the political thinkers because the individual man, the individual Athenian who wanted to become rich of course was in favor of mobility, that's clear; but one could say the consideration of an interested party is not the decisive consideration. The decisive consideration is the community as a whole, and there the whole case was loaded by broad political consideration in favor of stability rather than of mobility. And the question rightly put would be this: On the basis of what factor or factors unknown to Aristotle are modern men more willing to take chances than earlier men? This problem is of course well known, but usually it is discussed on the basis of a dogmatic premise or presumption which from the modern point of view is of course the right one. You know, when you read, for example—well, there are distinctions made between progressive societies and stationary societies. Now Athens surely was a relatively progressive society in this sense, but compared with any modern society it was amazingly stationary.

Student: Can you give another example of society other than Athens?

LS: Well, Sparta was infinitely more—

Student: No, I mean out of the ancient period, for comparison.

LS: Well, the—

Student: That was static and had this . . .

LS: I[6] do not know much today about China and India to say anything with any authority on this subject; I can only refer to what I have read and what is always presented this way. All these societies are, compared with the modern Western world, in themselves static. Especially China, you know, where the tradition is very, very long. And even in India, and to say nothing of the so-called primitive people.

Student: . . . but were they progressive when they . . .

LS: Ya, no. What must have happened . . . that there was a period of very great change, and let us call it progress; for example, when Confucius emerged in China. But then that was stabilized. There was an enormous change in the Near East with the emergence of Islam. Imagine, the destruction of polytheism in the Arabian peninsula and the severe Islamic moralism, and conquering then, as you know, this enormous part of the Mediterranean area. Ya, but what happened then? The principle was [that] there is a divine law that would come down through Mohammed, and this must be preserved. And the application to new situations, that is simply deduction from the principles laid out from Mohammed. No change of their framework; that is impiety. And similar things of course existed also in the Western world, as you know; but the first societies which as a

whole were "quote progressive," consciously, deliberately, were the modern Western societies. In other words, there was progress, but unavowed progress.

Have you ever read Sumner Maine's *Ancient Law*?[ii] Which is a very, very, useful study, where he tries to show the difference between ancient law and of course modern. Now the basic principle is [that] ancient law conceives of itself as unchangeable; modern law is understood as a matter of course changeable. Ancient law in fact changed, but it changed unavowedly. One means was, for example, legal fiction. The law is completely changed, but a fiction is made which makes it appear as if it were unchanged, this kind of thing. And others—and allegorical interpretations; you know, you say: This sacred text doesn't mean that—in particular, I think in Islam I remember an example: wine drinking is forbidden. And then commentators in Persia, where they like to drink wine, say: That means only wine from grapes and not other wine . . . In a modern society that's absolutely unnecessary. And therefore this doctrine of sovereignty which emerged in the sixteenth, seventeenth century is of such a crucial importance, because it implies this principle of change. What is unchangeable is the location of the lawmaker, not the law. The lawmaker is the sovereign. There must be one man or body of men who are the sovereign, and the laws regarded lawmaking must be stable, but the laws can be changed as you please.

And another which is also in the same context, the distinction between fundamental laws and nonfundamental laws. Nonfundamental laws, no problem. The fundamental laws are sacred. For example, in the French doctrine[7] . . . [married heirs],[8] that is the law Salic. This is fundamental. Also maybe that must be registration of the laws by the parliament. Fundamental: everything else follows. In our modern notion of constitution, this distinction survives, only we have provided for amendments of the constitution in order to indicate that change legitimately affects the constitution itself. But for one thing, that's no progress: the changer of the constitution is the people, and that the people should be sovereign is unchangeable. In other words, we still make this distinction between the unchangeable and the changeable, but we reduce the sphere of the unchangeable to the bare minimum. Older men tried to make it all-comprehensive. They never succeeded anyway, as little as we succeed in reducing the unchangeable to the bare minimum. But it is therefore a question of emphasis. But that is an all-important question.

Now a few more points. When Aristotle speaks of stronger, you didn't know what he means, number or property. I would say that depends. There may be a situation in which the number is irrelevant. For example, if you have a military organization in which a very small part of the population can control the rest, this small part is stronger than the others. That depends—the stronger is the proper translation of that word. That can be, that depends on all kinds of considerations, who is strong enough, [and] numbers ordinarily do play a role, of course.

Student: He wasn't talking about military though at all there, he seems to be talking about those who . . . constitutional rights.

[ii] Henry James Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law* (1861).

LS: Ya, but the rule which Aristotle gives is this: that those who adhere to the regime must be stronger than those who do not . . . In what that strength consists—for example, people who do not have rights may believe in the divine right of their ruler, and therefore the ruler doesn't need many battlements. However, the strength can come from *n* different reasons.

You raised a point about what Aristotle has to say on the law-enforcing offices; you did not emphasize the fact that this remark about the law-enforcing offices is unusually extensive. He devotes more, many more lines to this particular kind of office than with the others. Is it not remarkable? The problem I think has disappeared. How do you explain that? Why is Aristotle so much concerned with the law-enforcing offices, whereas we would not ascribe to it an important role. Ya?

Student: Well, it's an agency of stability in that if you've got no enforcement of the law—

LS: Ya, that everyone would admit. But still why would we not regard the question of the law-enforcing offices as a major political problem? Very simple, replace United States of America by the old-fashioned New England town, where fellow citizens have to be the law enforcers and get the . . . That's it. That's the reason. We do not have this simple direct democracy, or however you might call it, which Aristotle presupposes; and therefore this particular difficulty is connected with this question.[9] And now the last point regarding your paper; you said the end of book 6 was particularly confusing, why? I mean, there are many confusing things with this section without question. But why did you find the end particularly?

Same Student: It could have been the way I read it . . .

LS: Yes. But let's try to find out.

Same Student: I really didn't understand what states he was talking about, or if he meant states in general, or applying it to oligarchy. He, Barker says this, but Aristotle doesn't; Barker says he's speaking of states in general in the summary above, but Aristotle didn't say what he was talking about.

LS: Ya, I think—

Same Student: And I didn't really want to take Barker's word for it.

LS: Ya, that is very good, you should not take anyone's word for it. But I will take it up, I would say that the difficulty of this last section, I think, is this: that one would expect Aristotle to speak of the different executive offices in terms of the different regimes, i.e., which are good for democracy, good for oligarchy, and so, and he says very little about it. The emphasis is simply on which kind of executive offices are required in anything. But there are a few remarks nevertheless about the distinctively democratic and distinctively oligarchic offices at the end.

Same Student: Yes, right at the end.

LS: Ya, ya. But the observation is correct, and that is a great difficultly regarding this whole end, which I will take up later. There is only one point, which I mentioned already which was brought up by Mr. Snider in his paper. Where is Mr. Snider? Ya. Any benefit which he could derive from writing his paper, he loses because he can't read my handwriting. [Laughter] Now here he says, in a paper regarding last week's assignment: "In this type of democracy, all should have the right to elect to office, and property qualification should be made for holding office. With the more important the office, the greater should be the qualification." And this brings him into certain difficulties. Now what do you say to this assertion in itself, disregarding the Aristotelian text. All should have the right to elect to office, and property qualification for holding office. Is this a democracy? You say it is, on the basis of what? I mean, in the moment you make property the qualification, and especially a considerable property qualification, then it's oligarchy by this very fact. And you can say it is a mixture of democracy and oligarchy because everyone can elect and not everyone is eligible, but you cannot say democracy. Now if you would look up the passage 1319a29 to 32, do you have it?

Mr. Reinken:
On the one hand all the citizens will enjoy the three rights of electing the magistrates, calling them to account, and sitting in the law-courts; on the other hand the most important offices will be filled by election, and confined to those who can satisfy a property qualification. The greater the importance of an office, the greater might be the property qualification required. (1318b29-32)

LS: Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Alternatively, no property qualification might be required for any office— (1318b32-33)

LS: So, namely, only in the latter case would it remain a democracy. Ya. There was one point, and the other point—

Mr. Reinken: He's saying before this existed . . . the best variety of democracy.

LS: Let me come to that; that is a great, great question, which was also raised by someone else—no, by Mr. Snider, at the end of his paper. "The end of democracy is liberty, one form of which consists in the equal change between ruling and ruled." He means, of course, one sign of which consists in the fact that everyone rules and is being ruled in turn. "Is a system that restricts this right, such as Aristotle's agricultural democracy, actually a democracy? Is it not some new form of constitution lying between democracy and oligarchy?" That's a good question. And I think that question . . . So he isn't here, so I can't help him.

Now perhaps we consider again this passage regarding democracy; that is after all the subject to which we all have the easiest access by virtue of our being—living in a democracy. 1317b17, after he has given the general definition of democracy. After we have made this premise, and this being the initiating principle, namely, of democracy, the following things are democratic. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We can now proceed to study its attributes or institutions. (1317b18-19)

Didn't we go through this yesterday?

LS: Yes, but not enough. Apparently not clearly enough. That all choose the ruling offices from all. That's essential to the democracy proper. All are electors and all are eligible. If not, the democracy is qualified. But here, now, let us apply this to the rule of agricultural democracy. In what sense is it a democracy? Because everyone is eligible to office. Everyone is eligible to office according to law. Let us go on to the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
there is the system of all ruling over each, and each, in his turn, over all— (1317b20-21)

LS: Now that is, I think, that is not identical with the first condition, namely, this points out the fact that every individual citizen is eligible. That is an indication of course, if all, then each. But it is important that each has a prospect of being elected and not merely eligible. How can you get that? And that is said in the next item.

Mr. Reinken:
There is the method of appointing by lot to all offices—or, at any rate, to all which do not require some practical experience and professional skill— (1317b21-22)

LS: You see? Now take our rule of democracy: everyone can be elected and every hillbilly has as much a chance of being elected as the oldest Athenian patrician because [of] luck, luck. Unfortunately, we must make here a qualification. In certain cases, where experience and skill is needed, you have to consider that. Take the case of a general, the simple example, and someone who has never been in a war because he was bodily unfit or particularly averse to such dangers, for the life of soldiers is fraught with dangers, therefore you have to look at the individual; and therefore you have to make an election, but not an election by lot. And then the chances of the simple citizen decrease. Or there can be also other cases. For example, health offices. You have to see if this man is capable: does he have medical training, and so on and so on. Yes? The next point.

Mr. Reinken:
there is the rule that, apart from the military offices, no office should ever be held twice by the same— (1317b23-25)

LS: No, no, first, no property qualification or a small one. That is also perfectly compatible with agricultural democracy, where if you say a very small property

qualification, then the owner of a very small plot of land may very well have the property qualification. Now the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
There is the rule that, apart from the military offices, no office should ever be held twice by the same person—or, at any rate, only on few occasions, and those relating only to a few offices— (1317b23-25)

LS: Why that? Why is this necessary for a perfect democracy?[10] To give to everyone the chance. The chances that everyone will come to the top increase with a decrease of the tenure. Think of the man who has, say, roughly an opportunity [of] thirty years where he can be politically active. And say the highest of it are ten, three hundred, only three hundred of that generation can ever get it. Now[11] if people can be reelected all the time, the chances of the individual decrease. It is strictly logical. Next point.

Mr. Reinken:
there is, finally, the rule that the tenure of every office—or, at any rate, of as many as possible—should be brief. (1317b25-26)

LS: Is this is clear. Ya? In other words, if you reduce the tenure from one year to half a year, you immediately increase the chance of everyone by two, and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
There is the system of popular courts, composed of all the citizens or of persons selected from all, and competent to decide all cases—or, at any rate, most of them, and those the greatest and most important, such as the audit of official accounts, constitutional issues, and matters of contract. (1317b26-28)

LS: You see, as much as possible, everyone has a chance to act in a judicial capacity. That's another point. As much as possible, there are limits, surely. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
There is the rule that the popular assembly should be sovereign in all matters—or, at any rate, in the most important; and conversely that the executive magistracies should be sovereign in none—or, at any rate, in as few as possible. (1317b28-31)

LS: Let us stop here. Does this not also follow? Because everyone can be actually a member of the assembly, everyone does not have in fact the certainty that he will become an executive officer. The consequence: vest as much power as possible in that part of this body politic to which everyone actually belongs, make the assembly more powerful than any executive office. That's absolutely clear. That's democratic. And the question would then be: Is this compatible with a rural democracy? You remember that was the question raised. Is a rural democracy not a concealed polity or aristocracy? I would say, no, it is a true democracy in this sense, because all these conditions can be met by a rural democracy. Well, you have to make some concessions. If you have an assembly every two weeks and no railways and helicopters around, then of course you can have only rare

assemblies. But let us say you have in winter, and after harvest and before sowing time, they have three assemblies and they must do business for the whole year, and all important business is to be made there to the extent to which it is possible. If there should be suddenly a war scare before harvest time, then of course you have to do something else; you must have some man or a body of men who can act on behalf of the assembly. That is clear. But otherwise you can—I would say the first democracy, the agricultural democracy is . . . a genuine democracy.[12] By virtue of the necessity that these people do not want to be elected because they can't afford to stay away from their farm for a year, or for a shorter time even, [that] will bring it about that people in whom they have trust, i.e., respectable squires or respectable patricians, will in fact have the most important offices. Now the example in Athens, the most well-known example is of course that of Pericles:[13] the legal basis of his position was that he was elected and reelected for many years as general. Generals tend to be elected not by lot. And he succeeded in being trusted by the majority of his fellow citizens and therefore he could do it, he could do it—and not without troubles, as you may remember from history; but still, on the whole he succeeded. Now there was one point[14] in the democratic section here, which we have not discussed and which is of special importance, in 1318b, the beginning. Right at the beginning of 1318b.

Mr Reinken:
To find theoretically where truth resides, in these matters of equality and justice, is a very difficult task. Difficult as it may be, it is an easier task than that of persuading men to act justly, if they have power enough to secure their own selfish interests. The weaker are always anxious for equality and justice. The strong pay no heed to either. (1318b2-6)

LS: Ya. Now of course "theoretical" is not in the text in Aristotle, I mean it's wholly superfluous. "To find the truth about the just is rather difficult," but infinitely easier than to make it accepted because, [15]as Hobbes put it, whenever reason is against the man, the man will be against reason.[iii] This is clear. Now why I thought we should read it, that will appear when we turn to the end of 1318b. "The liberty to do what one wills." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
The power of acting at will leaves men with no defence against the evil impulses present in all of us. (1318b40-1319a2)

LS: Well, Aristotle says "in every one of the human beings"; that is not all of us because the Greek word "human beings" is sometimes used in contradistinction to man, man and then—you all know what Aristotle thought about the men. But let me explain this terminology. Human being, in Greek, *anthrōpos*:[16] that means any human being, surely, but it is also used in contradistinction to people who are not merely human beings but real guys, *hombres*. That is in Spanish the same thing, in Latin *vir*, meaning a male man, but not every male human being is *hombre*. And that is in Greek *anēr*, in Latin *vir*, in Spanish *hombre*. In German you also have the distinction *Mensch*, human being, and *Mann*. So

[iii] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law: Natural and Politic*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1889), xv.

Aristotle—God knows whether he didn't wish to exclude the real men. One must be careful. I wouldn't say either, but I would also preserve the ambiguity in the translation. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
Where there is responsibility, the result must always be an advantage of the first order in any constitution: government will be conducted by men of quality, and they will be saved from misconduct, while the masses will have their just rights. (1319a2-4)

LS: Ya. The student who read the paper last time rightly referred to the *Federalist Papers*. You know that no one—well, in the famous thing: power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely. You know?

Mr. Reinken: Tends to corrupt.

LS: Tends to corrupt. Is this what Lord Acton precisely said?

Mr. Reinken: Yes it was.[iv]

LS: So that's good, because otherwise, it would be—ya, no, tends is good. Absolutely true, therefore one must—but still. Very commonly in the *Federalist Papers* it goes beyond that, although the literal formulation I do not remember at the moment. No, for Aristotle of course it is not true. Power also can bring out the best in a man. That's clear. But here in this crude political consideration, he thinks: Let us be on the safe side and have some guarantees. Good. Now we turn to the subject of today, or is there a point which you would like to raise? Yes?

Student: I have a question about what you said last time, and I wasn't quite sure. You said that the end of man, for the sophists, I believe you said this, would be wealth and honor—

LS: . . . about Plato. I would like to take up the example of last time . . . that was surely incomplete. Now let us first say a few words about the end of book 6. Now at 1320b18, he begins with a discussion of oligarchy. And the meaning here also is how to establish or to construct an oligarchy. There is also here a terminological difficulty, as you will see; if you would read at the beginning there, where he begins. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We have now explained how democracies should be constructed; and in doing so we have virtually shown how oligarchies ought to be constituted. Each variety of oligarchy should be framed on the principle of opposites—that is to say, the structure of each should be calculated by that of the corresponding variety of democracy. The first and best

---

[iv] The statement is from Lord Acton, British historian, in a letter to Archbishop Mandell Creighton, April 1887. Mr. Reinken is correct that the phrase is "Power tends to corrupt." See, e.g., http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/214

balanced of oligarchies is closely akin to the constitution which goes by the name of 'polity.' (1320b17-23)

LS: You see it's closely akin, it is not identical. Aristotle calls it "well blended." And that of course would apply also to the best democracy, that it is well blended, but not by being not a democracy, but by coming close in its actual working to something better than a democracy, in the rural democracy. Yes, and what—why is it not identical? Let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
In an oligarchy of this type there should be two separate assessment rolls, a higher and a lower. Entry in the lower roll should qualify men for appointment to the lowest offices that have to be filled; but entry in the higher should be required for appointment to the more important. On the other hand, any person who acquires sufficient property to be put on an assessment roll should be given constitutional rights; and by this means a sufficient number of the people at large will be admitted to make those who enjoy rights in the state a stronger body than those who do not. The persons newly admitted to rights should always be drawn from the better sections of the people. (1320b23-30)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. You see, it is an oligarchy because of the open preponderance of wealth as wealth.[17] The wealth is not very great which is required for being a full citizen member, for being a member of the citizen body doesn't do away [with] the principle of wealth. Now a little bit later he speaks of the problem of oligarchy in general and uses two images for describing the function of the statesman. One is the body, and the other is a vessel. And these are famous images: the body politic and the vessel of state. Both are apt because[18] in a way the *polis* is natural like the body but in other ways also artificial, and therefore it can be compared to an artifact. And why he chooses a vessel, the ship, is clear, because of the particular storms which—it would be foolish to compare a city to a shoe, for example, which is worn. And there is also implied also in the case of the body there is strictly speaking no separation of ruler and ruled, whereas in the case of the vessel, you have first the state and then the pilot. You know,[19] both things are true in a way; it is a unity without an extraneous ruler, and yet in another way the *polis* is a unity with an extraneous ruler even in a popular regime, because the government is distinguished from the governed. Yes?

Mr. Denny: In this particular passage, it seems—it strikes me that the very close identification which Aristotle makes of the wealthy with oligarchy or the few is too limited for a general approach to oligarchy, especially when he talks about having two different roles here, it seems. Because if we look around at sort of modern oligarchies, we find that wealth isn't just—it isn't the only basis or even the main basis for many modern oligarchies, and the association should be much broader, I think. For example, on this case of the two roles, an interesting example I think would be the case in central Africa, where the whites have tried in various instances to have separate roles for the blacks and the whites, and they put this in terms of education and civilized men: civilized men who will vote on one bill, and the uncivilized on the other to a certain extent. So you really have many elements connected with an oligarchy besides wealth; you have education,

you have white skins, and other things. So to be perfectly general about oligarchy, I think the association with wealth makes it too narrow.

LS: Ya, but the point is this. Aristotle would say—now without going into the merits of the matter, merely taking the claims literally, i.e., uncritically,which to some extent you must do—to the extent to which the claim is based on education it would be an aristocratic regime and not an oligarchy, he would say. He has provided for that. Now the question of, for example . . . a new difficulty arises which is not discussed very much by Aristotle because apparently he did not regard it as very important (we will later see why), and that would be a racially heterogeneous society. Now that is of course you can say a great flaw, that he has not provided for that, or at least that he has not discussed it. But what would Aristotle's excuse be if we would accuse him of having disregarded such an important consideration?

Mr. Reinken: . . . at apartheid.

LS: Apartheid, ya.

Student: . . . based on race . . .

LS: Yes, sure. But fundamentally—still, apartheid means of course the denial of citizen rights, whereas what Mr. Denny spoke about was a city or community which consists of racially heterogeneous elements.

Mr. Reinken: But Aristotle disapproves of that because it makes for instability.

LS: Ya. In other words, we would not, we don't get a discussion right now in Aristotle on this issue; but we get it in a later thinker who to some extent, *to some extent* tried to restore Aristotle against Hobbes and Locke, and that was Rousseau. Rousseau in his *Social Contract*, which to some extent is a new plea for the city as distinguished from the modern state, goes into that question. And he makes this clear, that the democracy or republic, which he regards as the only legitimate regime, is possible only if the citizen body is of reasonable homogeneity. The chapter or chapters on The People in the *Social Contract*, book 2 or 3 (I've forgotten now), are crucial.[v] In other words, it is not only racial—well, what do we mean by race? Say ethnic, ya, ethnic because it, the question, arises not only in the case of different pigmentation, you know, it can also arise in the cases of different ethnic, religious, and economic—. Reasonable homogeneity in the three things, three politically important things, is a prerequisite for a viable democracy or republic, according to Rousseau. And of course in the moment it becomes necessary for a variety of reasons to visualize heterogeneous societies of this kind, very new devices will be needed, and that is true. Aristotle did not discuss that. He would simply say: I would not wish to be in charge of such a society.

Mr. Denny: No, I think you can extend this. I don't think it has to be just in terms of race, I probably shouldn't have mentioned education because I think it is more dubious

[v] *On the Social Contract*, book 2, chapters 8, 9, and 10 are on The People.

about education, but certainly you have lots of societies where not only racial heterogeneity undermines this kind of stability, but also things like religion—

LS: Ya, sure.

Student: Heterogeneity—things like language, an enormous range of things which Aristotle doesn't take into account of in regards to oligarchy.

LS: He can—no, let me put it this way: he takes them very much into account. By the way, language, that they knew every day, because that is one of the most divisive things, when people can't talk to one another. It is one of the most divisive things among human beings. Aristotle knew that very well, and his contemporaries too; and that was one of the objections to these big empires, like the Persian empire, where people who couldn't talk to one another were supposed to be fellow subjects. But no, Aristotle knew this very well, but he would say these are such obvious incompatibilities with the indispensible unity of the *polis*. That is I think his implicit reason. Now that doesn't mean, of course—and some societies have shown that it is possible to have these linguistic and racial diversities. Ya?

Student: Switzerland . . .

LS: Ya, but also many other states have done that. But the question is: Under what conditions was this possible? For example, is the difference between the Germans and French in Switzerland sufficiently fundamental as to—what was the alternative for these people? The alternative for these people was to be members of the German empire on the one hand, and the French monarchy on the other, and apparently they felt it is better to live with these barbarians in our state. Ya. I mean by "barbarians" people you don't understand, on the other side of the . . . than be subject to the French king or the German king. Yes?

Mr. Denny: Yes isn't this . . . what we're getting now is what maybe really is the difficulty, and that is that once Aristotle states the need for homogeneity, does he really say anything about the manner in which this can be built, developed? I mean, the assumption of heterogeneous elements, let's say.

LS: No, because—that he doesn't do that for the very reason which I stated. If this is such an enormous burden in itself, then try to avoid it in the first place. That is an extreme case where he would say that the people with experience on this score are in the best position to solve it. That does not belong to the theoretical questions. The question properly put would be this: since these are admittedly divisive things, under what condition is the divisive character politically irrelevant? Under what conditions? One could be that the only alternative given there would be worse for everyone. In other words, one would have to study this in Switzerland; the situation is very different in different countries. It is not without difficulties in Switzerland either. Ya?

Student: . . . what he uses in applying to Carthage as a mark of a fairly good regime—

LS: Ya, but Carthage was homogeneous, I'm afraid. They had a heterogeneous mercenary army, but that is easy provided you have a very brutal discipline, as you know, as the Foreign Legion in France. That is the simple problem which men have always been able to solve. And at the same time the common interest: booty, the booty.[20] The army becomes as it were the fatherland of the mercenary soldiers.[21] In some countries, I believe this country could also be counted among them, this question is of the utmost practical importance and only a great fool could deny that. But one way in which they can be minimized and which is underlying our whole approach today is of course the view that from the most fundamental point of view these differences are secondary. The theoretical expression of that is the doctrine of the rights of man. And the modern doctrine—I mean, that is not applicable to Switzerland because that goes back a longer time, but in present-day discussions, that of course always prevails. The difficulty of that comes back in spite the fundamental admission of human rights. That's the trouble. And how to handle then these difficulties depends entirely on the situation, on a given situation and no general statement is possible. But that it creates an unusual difficulty, an additional difficulty which is a difficulty inherent in any political organization, is manifest. And therefore from the point of view of common sense you could say: Well, if you can have it without that complication, the better.[22] This problem exists to an infinitely smaller extent in the British metropolis than—disregarding the Commonwealth,[vi] as it is now called—than in this country, for example. Yes?

Student: Would it be fair to say that in Aristotle's discussion of the best part of monarchy that a very carefully restricted mobility adds to stability?

LS: Under certain conditions, sure. I mean, Aristotle did not exclude that, you know. His treatment is a fact that for example the peasants should have the possibility of becoming wealthy. And he speaks later on, and you will be quite shocked to read that—I mean shocked from the point of view of logic, not of morality—when Aristotle says it is necessary to hold out the prospect of emancipation to the slaves, so you gradually get a population who are not citizens, who are freed men, which also adds a problem.

Student: It seems to me that this is really very close to describing British history.

LS: Ya, to some extent. What he means in this particular point, you mean, [is] an oligarchy which doesn't form a caste, but is open. Sure. Ya, but still this kind of mobility is absolutely under control. Absolutely under control. So they pick from time to time someone worthy to ascend. In other words, he must give them a guarantee that he will not upset the apple cart. But if you have mobility simply, you have no guarantee against the mobility upsetting the apple cart.

Now let us turn then to the more detailed discussion of oligarchy. He refers first to the military. Read the beginning 1321a5: "There are chiefly four parts of the multitude."

Mr. Reinken:

[vi] The Commonwealth, formed in 1931, is an association of fifty-three nations, each of which is an equal member. Many are former British colonies or dependencies.

Just as there are four chief divisions of the mass of the population—farmers, mechanics, shopkeepers, and day-labourers—so there are also four kinds of military forces—cavalry, heavy infantry, light-armed troops, and the navy. (1321a5-8)

Student: I think he means it is reasonable that they correspond.

LS: Ya, this right here—but there is unfortunately no such simple correspondence. Yes?

Student: Farmers?

LS: Yes, but still—no, farmers are not the knights.

Mr. Reinken:
Where a territory is suitable for the use of cavalry, there is a favourable ground for the construction of a strong form of oligarchy— (1321a8-10)

LS: So that is important, and that in a way settles the issue: wherever you do not have a preponderance of cavalry, one should even say of the knights, an oligarchy is very difficult to establish because here the superiority of the rulers is not only in wealth but also in military power. But that is unfortunately not, or fortunately not always possible and therefore oligarchy is much more difficult to establish than a democracy, as will appear from the sequel.

Now this part—we can't read the sequel. You can of course also make the heavy armed soldiers a very important element in oligarchy, but then you have to have the first kind of oligarchy, where the property qualification is not high. The question is under certain conditions of civil war—you must not forget [that] what is characteristic of Aristotle's *Politics*, we can say, is the eternal presence of the danger of civil war. This is not a simply edifying book, it's a tough book, and therefore let us go into the details. Now Aristotle doesn't give us too much . . . but you know the importance of these matters for political things: the famous significance of the barricades up to a certain point, you know, and therefore taken care of by Haussmann, the French town planner[vii] who rebuilt Paris so that the barricades could no longer be of military importance, discussed with great interest by Marx and Engels.[viii] This type of thing, you know . . . was a practical man. And Aristotle from a different point of view has the same pragmatism as this. There are situations in which the light infantry, the light not heavy armed infantry, has great military advantages. Think in American history, these fellows you know who did not move in heavy columns like the Redcoats[ix] but were just shooting from behind a tree had great military advantage under certain conditions. Aristotle says: Let us try to find an equivalent for that, if you can, if you want to have an oligarchy; and that would mean let your younger boys, who are not yet, say, between seventeen and nineteen or so, let them

---

[vii] Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann was appointed in 1853 to implement Napoleon III's plan to demolish the warrens of medieval street in Paris in order to create long, wide avenues and also public spaces and railway stations.
[viii] See Friedrich Engels, "The Housing Question" (1872).
[ix] Redcoats were British soldiers, so named because of the color of their uniform.

learn to fight as light infantry and then they can help you a bit if you are in such a situation. That's all. You know, that's all he says. He replies to a military problem in military terms, which is the only way to solve a military problem, isn't it? I mean, that is strictly limited here.

Now we come to a more political discussion in the sequel, 1321a14. This is the first recipe, indeed. The oligarchy must beat the *dēmos* at its own game; otherwise it can't last. That's the first recipe. Then he gives the second recipe: there must be the possibility of ascent, not a closed caste. That was a point which impressed you. We can read that, that is in a26 to 31. Ya?[x]

Mr. Reinken:
Another way, of which Thebes affords an example, is that the right should be given to those who have not followed any mechanical occupation for a number of years. A third way, which is that followed at Massalia, is to compile a list of all who are worthy of office, whether or no they have at the time a place in the civic body. (1321a27-32)

LS: In other words, weeding out of the unworthy from time to time, not to have a kind of impossible burden on the ruling class. That's clear. Yes, and the last point.

Mr. Reinken:
The most important offices, which must necessarily be held by full citizens, should involve the duty of performing unpaid public services. This will have the effect of making the people willing to acquiesce in their own exclusion from such offices, and it will make them ready to tolerate officials who pay so heavy a price for the privilege. These higher officials may also be properly expected to offer magnificent sacrifices on their entry into their office, and to erect some public building during its course. The people—sharing in these entertainments, and seeing their city decorated with votive ornaments and edifices—will readily tolerate the survival of oligarchy; and the notables will have their reward in visible memorials of their own outlay. (1321a32-41)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. So that's the third recipe: making ruling offices undesirable by putting special burdens on them. Now this is all Aristotle has to say about oligarchies; and he says nothing whatever here about the extreme forms of oligarchies, you know, he takes only the mildest form. Because it is fairly easy by analogy to find out, it is infinitely more difficult to maintain them, only under very unusual conditions and so on; we can figure that out for ourselves.

Now then there begins the last section of book 6, and this is a survey of the offices, of the ruling offices, and without any emphasis on how these various offices are related to the different regimes. And that's very strange, because Aristotle had discussed already the question of the different executive offices in book 4, much more, in 1299a to 1300b, much more extensive than here. And it is a great question for the understanding of the *Politics* as a whole: Why does he bring this here, this seemingly unnecessary repetition?

---

[x] The tape was changed at this point.

That is a very difficult question which we can barely answer. Let us look at it a bit more closely.

Now Aristotle states first two general principles. First, a distinction between two kinds of ruling offices: the ones which he calls necessary, and those which are required for good order. Now that must be well understood. The others are also necessary from another point of view. "Necessary" means in Aristotle frequently merely necessary, without any inherent dignity. For example, garbage collecting is obviously necessary given certain conditions, but no one would regard this as something to look up to. Judges are also necessary, but judges are respected. So Aristotle always distinguishes between—not always, frequently distinguishes between the necessary and the noble, where the meaning is [that] the necessary is something which is merely a means and cannot be understood as an end, the noble can be understood as something choiceworthy for its own sake. And the second general principle is that there is a difference regarding the ruling offices between small and large cities. Small cities can't have as many offices, as great a variety of offices as in small ones; therefore you have to wonder which offices can be combined with which, and which are not combinable. Those are the two general principles.

Now then first he speaks of the necessary offices and mentions six of them: the supervision of the markets, supervision of streets and buildings, supervision of buildings and so on, and rivers and so, and the countryside, revenue collectors, etc., recorders, secretaries, and finally, the penal executive officers. This last form is discussed by Aristotle with unusual length because that seems to create special difficulties, and it surely does if you have a *polis*, a small society where the men responsible for your execution and so on are your fellow citizens. You know there are all kinds of pressures which your family can bring on the family of the other; you must know that. And therefore that is a particularly difficult thing. But it is not one of the jobs desirable for their own sake, I mean, they are really onerous.

And then he turns to the most respectable ruling offices in 1322a following. Now the first are military offices, surely generals are looked up to, that's clear. The second highest are financial officers, the auditors. And the third, that we must read, 1322b12, where we come to an especially important one.

Mr. Reinken:
Besides the various offices already mentioned, there is another which controls, more than any other office, the whole range of public affairs. (1322b13-14)

LS: In other words, we come now to the highest executive office, which clearly cannot be the generals for the simple reason that the highest offices must be civil, civilian and not military, except accidentally. And what is that?

Mr. Reinken:
The office in question is one which, in a large number of states, possesses the double power of introducing matters and of bringing them to completion. Short of that, and where the people itself is in control, it presides over the assembly; for there must be a

body to act as convener to the controlling authority of the constitution. The holders of this office are in some states called *Probouloi*, or the preliminary council, because they initiate deliberation; but where there is a popular assembly, they are called the *Boulē* or Council. (1322b14-18)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. In other words, in a democratic regime, the power of these men who prepare bills is much smaller than in an oligarchic, and so. That's clear. But even there, even in a democracy, that is the highest executive office from his point of view. And the . . . is the highest because however sovereign the assembled people may be as to what they want to do, the timing and the preparation of the bills in formal . . . as you all have learned in many classes in political science is of the utmost importance. And I suppose you can bring some American examples of committees, senate committees especially, which enormous power they wield in spite of the fact that this is a democracy. That's what Aristotle means. That is the most important office, that which prepares the business of the assemblies. That is the highest, because what we would call the executive, where is that? What you would call the executive—where is that here? The commander in chief, that's military, that is as such subject to civilian control. There is no chief, no single chief executive as we have in the American Constitution, nor a prime minister in the British sense; that is not provided for. It is a collegium, a body, a small body of men who has the highest executive power in society, even in a democracy.

Now then we come to the last point, because these nine are the political offices proper. Now we come to the next.

Mr. Reinken:
But there is also another province of affairs, which is concerned with the cult of the civic deities; and this requires— (1322b18-19)

LS: Ya, of course Aristotle simply says "to the gods." Barker should not bring in his distinction here. "To the gods." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
and this requires offices such as priests and custodians of temples—custodians charged with the maintenance and repair of fabrics and the management of any other property assigned to the service of the gods. Occasionally (for example, in small states) the whole of this province is assigned to a single office; in other states it may be divided among a number of offices, and apart from priests there may also be the superintendents of sacrifices, the guardians of shrines, and the stewards of religious property. Closely related to these— (1322b19-27)

LS: "Of the sacred things." There is no Greek word for religion. "The sacred things."

Mr. Reinken: So this might be the ritual objects rather than. . .

LS: All kinds of things. Any vessel or what have you could be. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Closely related to these various offices there may also be a separate office, charged with the management of all public sacrifices which have the distinction of being celebrated on the city's common hearth, and, as such, are not legally assigned to the priests. The holders of this office are in some states called archon, in others king, and in others prytaneis. (1322b26-30)

LS: Ya. Do you know where they were called kings?

Student: Rome.

LS: Athens. Athens in particular. The Athenians elected ten rulers, *archontes*, every year. And one had the title, the additional title, the ruler king, and he was in charge of the sacred things; therefore also in charge of Socrates's trial, you know, because Socrates's trial fell within this domain.

Now then afterward Aristotle repeats this enumeration in a different way, and gives as the first item that the offices which have to do with the daemonic things, i.e., the gods, and war. For some strange reason he takes them together, and ends again in this enumeration with the council. The council. And the whole enumeration ends here with the council. Now there is a certain difficulty here. You see, the council was the highest, we have seen before, and here the list ends with that. What about—and that of course is a very dubious inference, but one must try it at any rate: would not the first then be the lowest, the things that have to do with the gods? In this case we find an easy solution straight from the horse's mouth, meaning Aristotle, because he takes up that question again in book 7, and there (we will read that next time) he gives a solution, in this formula. He gives another enumeration of the offices, in order of importance: one, two, three, and so. And then when he comes to number five he says "the fifth and first," what has to do with the gods.[xi] In one sense, it does not belong to the important ones, only with number five. The judicial system, and the executive offices and legislative is much more important. But in another sense, by its inner claim, because gods are much superior to men, it must be the first.

That is a problem of very great importance for Aristotle, much more important than appears from the number of lines devoted to this problem. You know that has also to do then with the great question raised before, one of the heterogeneities you mentioned are religious heterogeneities. Now but if you have a civic religion, that means there is no religious heterogeneity. This can be very "quote liberal unquote" in practice. If you fall in love with a certain Egyptian goddess, no one may prevent you from worshiping her at home, and all this kind of thing, but in principle of course it is not liberal at all: you have to comply with the public . . . Ya? And Aristotle never for a moment suggests any liberalism in this respect. He would suggest a liberal handling, a liberal easygoing handling, as gentlemen would, naturally, but the . . . and that is one important difference between the modern democracy and the ancient democracy: the ancient democracy was

[xi] 1328b11-13.

not secular. Was not secular. That has been confused very much, because in the eighteenth century, especially in France and other countries, England too, when they fought against the established churches they always looked back to classical antiquity with its beautiful liberalism, you know, men like Voltaire and others. Ya, but surely Athens was much more liberal, say, than the Spain of Torquemada,[xii] there is no doubt about that. But it was of course not liberal in the strict sense, because that was only an easygoing practice; there was no right involved here. That people have rights,[23] full civic rights, regardless of whether they belong to the established religion, or in the[24] clearer case, there is no established religion. Think how long it took before non-conformist Christians in England acquired, non-conformist Protestant Christians acquired full civil rights. But still, the modern society from its very beginning tended to be a purely secular society. And one can admittedly find that very clearly in Hobbes, right at the beginning; and that is a major difference, and it still plays a certain role, naturally, even in the Western democracies. And the passionate interest which politically interested people had in that race in Virginia[xiii] is a simple contemporary proof of that, if you needed proof. Yes?

Student: Well, even though it seems that Aristotle is assuming, apparently, a simple set of conditions—that is, if you have homogeneity of all these things, religion, ethnicity, all the things that one could list, nevertheless, when he takes the one factor which varies, that is wealth, rich and the poor—

LS: Yes, you remember that—

Same Student: He discusses the principles and not how this is distributed within the polity or democracy. I think we have extended this to cover these other cases in our particular democracy as follows. That is, we have done such things as balanced tickets, or . . . factors, so even though he doesn't discuss this, there is a sense in which you can say the principle is still the same.

LS: Very good. That is, I would go with you up to this point but I have to add some qualification. Now only my initial remark. That is in a way what I meant all the time. The very simplicity of the scheme in Aristotle compared with the enormously complex situation of moderns is eminently helpful in clarifying a more complex . . . simply that the *polis* as analyzed by Aristotle is at it were a natural model for analyzing all complex societies. That is what was always in my mind as well, but there is something else. The question is whether the other heterogeneities, other than the so-called phenomenon of rich and poor, are simply of the same character as rich and poor. In other words, you know, whether you do not have to take into consideration the substance of these heterogeneities: rich, poor, were—no, for example, a very simple thing. The

---

[xii] Tomás de Torquemada (1420-1498), Dominican friar, first Inquisitor General of Spain.

[xiii] Strauss is probably referring to the West Virginia Democratic primary election held on May 10, 1960. John F. Kennedy had a strong lead in that state, but by the spring he was trailing behind Senator Hubert Humphrey from Minnesota. His advisors told him that it was because the voters had learned that he was Catholic. Kennedy addressed the anti-Catholic bias directly and won the primary by a substantial margin.

transition from poverty to wealth or vice versa has in itself nothing to do with a change of convictions. The man may have the same, only accidentally. The man may have exactly the same conviction prior and after his bankruptcy, for example, only accidentally, but that is not essentially different. But in the case of religious conviction it would be. You know? And similar in the case of languages as language, one would say that that is in itself nothing in particular, that is even in a way politically more superficial, you can say, than rich or poor, but practically of the very greatest importance because what people think about the difference of languages makes it a very divisive force. That would have to be taken into consideration.

Now the last point I'd like to make regarding book 6 concerns the end, that is 1322b37; that really must be the last sentence in 1322 b. "Now there are peculiar offices for those cities which have greater leisure and are more wealthy," are more better off, yes, "and furthermore for those which are concerned." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
In addition there are offices peculiar to certain states which have a more leisured character and a greater degree of prosperity, and concern themselves with good discipline—offices for the supervision of women; for enforcing obedience to law; for the supervision of children; and for the control of physical training. We may also include the office for the superintendence of athletic contests and dramatic competitions and all other similar spectacles. Some of these offices—those for the supervision of women and children, for example—are clearly out of place in a democracy: the poor man, not having slaves, is compelled to use his wife and children as followers and attendants. (1322b38-1323a7)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now here that's only a specimen of how offices are affected by the difference of regime. They obviously need all deliberative, judicial, priests and so on and so on. But here's the difference. Take a modern example. An institution like censorship is an undemocratic institution, I believe most people would say today. An undemocratic institution. It interferes with that freedom to live as you like which is a principle of democracy. Now Aristotle gives these examples which . . . are censors, who watch the manners of women and of children. That is an undemocratic institution, as Aristotle doesn't hesitate to say. Why is it undemocratic? Because the democracy is the interests and tastes of the many, i.e., the poor decide. Now the poor cannot keep their women at home. That was at least the Athenian understanding of female propriety, that they are not walking the streets and this kind of thing. The poor are unfortunately forced to send their women out to work, on the marketplace or whatever have you; therefore, it doesn't work. So I think the principle is perfectly clear . . . and now this is all I think we . . . to say now about book 6 and I have—but you raised a question which had very much to do with a broader question we discussed last time. I would also like to bring up another question, but what is the time now?

Student: . . .

LS: Fine. Now Mr. Brown, will you come to me after class? Because you brought up a question a short time ago which I would like to bring up and I don't know the context in which it came up, will you come to me after class? Good. Now what was your question, Miss Greenwald?

Miss Greenwald: I believe last time you said that the end of man, to the sophists, [was] wealth and honor. Is that correct?

LS: To begin with, ya.

Miss Greenwald: Yes, and I think, I am not sure, I might have misunderstood you, but I thought you said that this was different from Locke's, because it was not subjective whereas Locke's was subjective. However, it seems—if this is what you said, it seems to me that wealth and honor would lead to the same thing Locke said in other words happiness, which would be subjective.

LS: Ya, that is true. That is a real difficulty here. Now I remind you of the problem. Ancient democracy, modern democracy. Aristotle gives a definition of democracy, you remember, the overall definition in which we recognize crucial elements of modern democracy: freedom in the sense of doing what one likes to the extent to which it is at all possible (to do what one prefers is a formula which I have read in the present-day theories); and the second, ruling and being ruled in turn, which is of course considerably modified by representative democracy but in some ways, at least legally, [that] everyone is an elector and everyone is eligible, is preserved. Only the eligibility—no care is taken that the eligibility of everyone becomes a fact. That cannot be done and is not even desirable in the modern condition. What are the differences there? Now I would first say the differences are due to the fact that Aristotle thinks of democracy in the *polis*, in a small society where representative government is out of place and unnecessary; and secondly the institution of slavery, that's always there and that of course accounts for certain differences. But still, once we realize this, we realize also that we cannot start in understanding the difference between Aristotle's democracy or the ancient democracy and modern democracy by looking only at the different democracies, but we have to look at the difference between modern society and ancient society as a whole, because ancient society, regardless of whether it was democratic or not, was a *polis*, and modern society, regardless of whether it is democratic or not, is not a *polis*. And similarly, the same applies to slavery: the presence of slavery in the old scheme, the absence of slavery in the modern scheme.

We have then to consider, contrast ancient society with modern society. But this is not possible in a clear way except if we consider ancient thought, ancient political thought in its difference from modern political thought. And why this switch from society to thought? I would explain that as follows: when we speak of societies, we think in the first place of the peculiar social institutions characteristic of a society. But these institutions are all meant to be means for an end, whether that end is clearly understood or not. Institutions are never an end in themselves. Therefore we have to consider the ends as intended by the institutions in classical times and the institutions in modern times. But

these ends become clear, become visible only in thought and not as mere facts; therefore the emphasis on thought as distinguished from the mere institutions is due to the primacy of [the] end as distinguished from the means.

Now what are the different ends of society as a whole according to Aristotle and according to the modern doctrine? I discussed that last time in a very limited way, naturally, taking Locke as a good representative of modern thought and Aristotle of classical thought. And then we see clearly [that] for Aristotle the end is virtue; for Locke it is the protection of property. We can reduce this to a more fundamental principle by using some others terms which are not identical but which are implied in that by saying that in Aristotle the emphasis is on duties; in the modern doctrine the emphasis is on rights. Both admit implicitly or explicitly duties or rights, naturally, because they are in a way inseparable, but the question [is] of the emphasis, whether the rights are in the service of duties or the duties in the service of rights. In this respect, the distinction is very clear. I cannot now develop, to show that this orientation by rights is underlying the more recent orientation by such things as self-realization. I give you only one link between right and self-realization, and that is creativity.[25] The bearer of the rights is the individual, and this individual is conceived of then on the basis of a deeper reflection as the originator of all values, creator; self-realization in the sense of realizing those ends which he fundamentally creates. But that only in passing.

The real difficulty in such an analysis stems from this: Aristotle is a very outstanding man, naturally. But there were other classical thinkers who thoroughly disagreed with him, and these other thinkers are popularly known by the name the sophists. And therefore, since the sophists are much closer to Locke than Aristotle is, the real difference between ancient and modern thought will appear from a comparison not between Aristotle and Locke, but between the sophists and Locke. Now the first difference which strikes one immediately is this, that the sophists—I use this word really only for the sake of gross convenience, but I cannot go into that question now. The [view of the] sophistic thinkers can be stated as follows: there is nothing which is just by nature. Justice is altogether a matter of convention. And here you see the difference from Locke very clearly. Locke speaks all the time of natural rights and a natural law. Ya, but what does this mean? The sophistic teaching implies that there is no harmony, no fundamental harmony between self-interest and the common interest. There is no harmony. I mean, of course if people are fooled, they may believe in such harmony, and that is very desirable as they say, but the really bright guys, the tyrants, know that there is no such harmony: Thrasymachus, the first book of the *Republic*, Polus in the *Gorgias*, and so on.

Locke on the other hand takes it for granted that there is a harmony between self-interest and the common interest. What does this mean, however? That is a very nice doctrine, and we are as decent people all in favor of such a harmony. But that is misleading. What does it mean? If the self-interest becomes concentrated in property and only as such is it politically interesting—and the property means of course not just to preserve your property but implies also acquisition: *Federalist* number 10.[xiv] Then it means that this

[xiv] "The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first

acquisitiveness is in harmony—that in principle unlimited acquisitiveness is in harmony with the public interest. And if we want to understand this in a non-hypocritical way, we have to go back to the man who formulated that principle in the most brutal manner, and that was this unspeakable fellow, Mandeville, who wrote a book *Private Vice, Public Benefit.*[xv] Private vice. Now here the difference is very clear: the ancient sophists said private vice is of course not public benefit. And in modern times we find this in various forms; we could even find it in a different way in Machiavelli. I can't go into that.[26] In modern times there is a harmony between private vice and public benefit.

Now from here we can by one further step reach an overriding formula which applies to the sophists and Aristotle as well, and therefore is really the crucial difference. The word for profit which the classics use, or [for] gain, is the Greek word called *kerdos*. *Kerdos*. Now what is gain? What is profit? Well, ordinarily we know what every businessman understands by it, whether he is honest or dishonest. But then there is a dialogue, which is now regarded as spurious, by Plato called the *Hipparchus*, which deals—well, Socrates himself raises the question: What is gain? And then of course he shows very well that wealth is not solid gain because that is, as you know, easily taken away from you and so on. So what is then the true gain? The highest good. And the highest good according to Socrates consists in knowledge. That is, the highest private benefit—private benefit, private good—is wisdom, philosophy, science or however you call it. And here again he finds the thesis: there is no preestablished harmony between the private good and the public good. So in other words, what you find on the lowest level of mere acquisitiveness in the vulgar sense you find again on the highest level. And therefore we can say the real difference, with a qualification I bring in immediately, between the classics and moderns is this: a fundamental harmony between the individual and society in modern thought, the questioning of that harmony in premodern thought.

Now there is one crucial qualification: in a way of course the classics admit such a harmony. But how is this harmony—where do we find that harmony?[27] Where do you find it? In Aristotle, we have read it all the time: the *polis*. There is a harmony between the *polis* and the individual, that's the meaning, the *polis* is natural. I as a human being cannot be truly a human being except by being fully a citizen. The harmony between private interest and public interest is brought about by moral virtue, not by philosophy as philosophy, nor by self-seeking as self-seeking. If you replace moral virtue by justice, you are in a way more precise, in a way less clear, but they are in this context practically synonymous. In other words, the perfection of the individual is identical with the perfection of the citizen. The perfection of man is identical with the perfection of the citizen, because the perfection of man is moral virtue. That is indeed the Aristotelian solution. But the difficulty here—and you can say that is a solution which all decent men at all times believed in. It is, however, exposed to certain theoretical difficulties. It is a

---

object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties." *Federalist* 10.

[xv] Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1714).

good formula, which is so good also because it conceals the deeper difficulties. Aristotle, being a theoretical man, does not conceal difficulties and therefore he sets them forth.

Now where does the difficulty appear in Aristotle in what we have read? Good man and good citizen. They do not—even if you don't go into any deeper reflection, the good man and the good citizen do not always coincide. You remember: the good man and the good citizen coincide only if the city is of a certain kind, namely, the best city. But this best city unfortunately is rarely, if ever, possible. One difficulty. But even in the best city, it requires only the ruling—the citizen as a ruling man is the good man, not as he is ruled only. But ultimately, of course, one has to go much beyond that. In other words, how is the problem solved on this level in modern thought? We can say this: moral virtue proper has no place in that basic modern scheme, the scheme of Hobbes and Locke; what you need as virtue is instrumental virtue, i.e., not virtue choiceworthy for its own sake but only in a utilitarian sense. And that means also that the content and the range of virtue is enormously limited, as is indicated by the phrase "honesty is the best policy," which is—honesty is much narrower than human excellence as it was understood by the classics. Simply speaking, moral virtue is not needed. Two things are sufficient: enlightenment, which means also enlightened self-interest, but it means much more; and secondly, positive law. Enlightenment and positive law together establish the harmony between private interest and public interest.

Now if we apply this to our question—I mean, I disregard completely and deliberately the enormous complication which arose from the fact that the unsatisfactory character of the Lockean scheme led to that great and justly famous moralistic reaction, started by Rousseau and in a way completed by Kant, which tried to restore morality to the position which it had in the Aristotelian scheme. That would not fundamentally affect what I say, although it is of course very important, but I cannot explain now why it does not fundamentally affect it. Those who happen to be in the Marx seminar[xvi] will remember the few remarks I made last time about this process, the historical process establishing the rational order which is as Machiavellian in Kant as it was in a different way in Adam Smith, to say nothing of Machiavelli himself.

I limit myself now to this point. In trying to understand modern democracy in contradistinction to ancient democracy we cannot possibly overestimate the importance of that phenomenon once called the Enlightenment, and not as a historical fact of the eighteenth century, but as a fact present, co-present with the modern democracy in all its stages. When Aristotle says [that] democracy is the rule of the uneducated, modern democracy denies that by virtue of its notion of popular education. Connected with all this is what I mentioned before: the secular character of modern democracy, which is only another expression of that, the *liberal* character. There are certain fundamental rights of the individual, one of which being the right of religious freedom, which has no parallel in ancient thought. And furthermore, enlightenment means also the essential harmony between science and society; and this harmony finds its expression in the phenomenon of science serving society. In one word: technology, which is of course wholly absent in any strict sense from the classical democracy. And this in itself leads of course *in itself* to the

[xvi] Strauss taught, with Joseph Cropsey, a course on Marx in the spring quarter of 1960.

absolute impossibility of small states in the way of the ancient *polis* because—I don't have to labor that point.

Another point which is also implied in everything I said, and I can here only enumerate it, is the distinction between state and society, which is implied in everything I said and which is wholly absent from the classical notion, and with this interesting difficulty that it is impossible clearly to decide which of the two is higher, state or society. You may remember that from a former discussion: the ends of the individual—the ultimate end is happiness. Happiness is that for which men live, and happiness is subjective, whereas the conditions of happiness, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are objective, they apply equally to all. Therefore the state is higher because it stands for the only thing in these matters objective; but this objective unfortunately is not the end. That I think is the minimum one must say about the modern distinction between state and society.

One could say [that] to live as one likes, this formula of ancient democracy as given by Aristotle, is in modern times elaborated infinitely beyond the ancients and becomes in the elaborated form the distinction between state and society. In ancient times (and that may be an answer to your question), happiness was always understood, if we use these modern terms, as objective. And the very simple reason is this: if you start from the lowest level and do not go into these refined analyses in Plato and Aristotle, what does happiness mean? Surely a state of contentedness, that's clear. If someone is always dissatisfied, he's clearly not happy. But a man can be content, for example, because he is a moronic individual, you know, or an idiot of some kind, and you would not call that man a happy man. Now make this implication clear: happiness is the state of enviable contentedness. And this element of "enviable" contains the objectivity: that is not something which is a peculiarity of this fellow but something which everyone somehow wishes for himself, and taking it again on the crudest level, to be reasonably wealthy and to have a pleasant life, lots of fun. That is so. That is what most men desire and like, and that is happiness in the vulgar sense.

Somehow connected with that—but that is again mere enumeration of analysis; I don't have the time now—is this: that in the classical notion I believe it is clearer than in the modern notion of democracy that freedom itself is the end, is the end not only of democracy but of the individuals. Freedom as an end. Of course that is said all the time, that in modern democracy that's the case, but it is not so clear. It is very far from being clear whether it is so. Why is it an end so clearly in the classics? Because of the presence of slavery. Therefore freedom itself is constantly experienced as a good, we do not—by virtue of the nonexistence of slavery proper, we cannot sense that daily, constantly as a good. Now what—did I answer your question or did I not?

Miss Greenwald: I don't think so.

LS: . . .

Miss Greenwald: . . . Do you want me to repeat question?

LS: Ya.

Miss Greenwald: . . . I asked you—last time you stated that the end of man for the sophists was wealth and honor. You said this is in no way subjective, which differs from Locke's understanding of property as happiness . . . and I'm just saying here that wealth and honor could also be . . . as happiness . . . would be subjective.

LS: But from Locke's point—well, let me say it this way. Locke and Hobbes say explicitly that happiness—they don't use the word subjective, but apart from the word they say the same thing: happiness is subjective. In all these ancient discussions, it is taken for granted that there is a difference of opinion as to what constitutes happiness, but that is surely not— [xvii]

---

[1] Deleted "But since this worked"
[2] Deleted "it means"
[3] Deleted "and to, you know"
[4] Deleted "then we come back"
[5] Deleted "and this is"
[6] Deleted "I believe, I mean I have not been"
[7] Deleted "the law domain…law or only". The words originally transcribed as "the law domain" may have referred to the doctrine of *domain réservé,* which once designated absolute domestic sovereignty.
[8] Untranscribed in the original, the words sound like "married heirs" when one would expect, given the content of the Salic law, "male heirs".
[9] Deleted "But you had another point, or someone had one. Student: No."
[10] Deleted "to get"
[11] Deleted "if you"
[12] Deleted "although it—so it"
[13] Deleted "whose legal, I mean his legal basis, yes"
[14] Deleted "in, regarding"
[15] Deleted "people, when"
[16] Deleted "in French—yes, *anthrōpos*"
[17] Deleted "That it is"
[18] Deleted "there is something"
[19] Deleted "this distinction is also"
[20] Deleted "that could"
[21] Deleted "Now that is, surely I don't want"
[22] Deleted "I mean, you know it is easier to …"
[23] Deleted "civic"
[24] Deleted "more"
[25] Deleted "the individual"
[26] Deleted "that there is no harmony between"
[27] Deleted "according, I mean"

[xvii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 15: no date
Slavery; the best regime: aristocracy; happiness of the individual and the *polis*

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —by a particularly high degree of caution. [Laughter] If this is of any help to you, then that is a very good quality. But sometimes caution also prevents one from a necessary daring, you know? [Laughter] And therefore—I will come to that. You made many very good remarks. What I regard as the defect of your paper is this.[i] You discussed very clearly the Aristotelian discussion of imperialism of the *polis* versus self-preservation or a defensive posture. You did not make clear the relation of this problem of imperialism to the question of the good life of the individual. You showed some awareness of it, but you did not draw the conclusion. I mean, what is the—present it in the form of a proportion. Let us call it imperialism, all right? [LS writes on the blackboard] Imperialism to defenses. That's in the *polis*. What is the equivalent of that for the individual?

Student: Well, there are a number of distinctions. One is simply between the life of political activity and involvement in it, and the life of contemplation. But there is a more extreme version of political life which would be being a tyrannical ruler, which would in a sense—

LS: So, all right, alternative to what?

Same Student: To being an active citizen.

LS: Say a republican citizen. All right, that's true. But there is also the other distinction you alluded to.

Same Student: Which is the life of contemplation, which could—

LS: The practical life proper, the political life, to the theoretical life. That is the lack of courage which you have shown. It is very strange that the practical political man corresponds on the level of the individual life with the imperialistic *polis*, and the theoretical man corresponds to the self-contained *polis*. But we must discuss that later. Now there are a few other points: when regarding the worship of the gods, "first in order of merit" is Barker's addition—

Same Student: Oh, this is not?

LS: No, no, "fifth and first" is what Aristotle said. That, we come to that later. Now then you made a remark which I did not quite understand, about that all things have been

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

discovered hitherto, only they must be brought together, and you referred wisely to the parallel in the second book. Did you say anything about the difference between the two statements? That did not become clear to me.

Same Student: I didn't really; I think there was more emphasis in the earlier statement that most things really have already been discovered—

LS: Yes—

Same Student: And the relative looseness in in book 7 that discovery proper should be limited to what had not been discovered but also the implication that much could be gained from using things which had already been and not losing . . .

LS: Yes, what I am concerned about is only this: the statement in book 7 is not an identical repetition of what he said in book 4.

Same Student: No.

LS: And I think we can say that's a general rule, there are no identical repetitions. There's always something, a new twist to a thought in the repetition. Then I did not quite understand what you said about the question of the good citizen in book 7 as distinguished from book 3.

Same Student: Well, the main point would be that the good citizen would also necessarily be a good man, and he would be relative to the regime but he would be relative to the best regime.

LS: So therefore . . .

Same Student: Well, to be relative to the best would be in a sense absolute.

LS: Absolute, ya, so I see. That was a difficulty which I had. Now the last point regarding slavery, there I think you seemed rather obviously to lack daring. Now let us read that passage in 1330a25, following, you may begin with that. 1330a25, at the end of 1330a.[1]

Mr. Reinken:
The class which farms it [the territory—Mr. R] should ideally, and if we can choose at will, be slaves— (1330a26-27)

LS: Ya. No, this what he says. "Ideally," means in Greek "according to wish." It could be done according to wish. You remember that. Aristotle uses this much simpler and clearer expression. What an ideal is is very hard to say, but what a wish is, we all know. We must only understand that the wish is not an arbitrary wish but the wish of sensible people. You understand, ya? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but slaves not drawn from a single stock, or from stocks of a spirited temper. This will at once secure the advantage of a good supply of labour and eliminate any danger of revolutionary designs. Failing slaves, the next best class will be one of serfs who are not of Greek origin and whose character is like what has just been described. The farm hands employed on private estates should belong to the owners of those estates: those who are employed on public property should belong to the public. How the slaves who till the soil should be treated, and why it is wise to offer all slaves the eventual reward of emancipation, is a matter which we shall discuss later. (1330a27-33)

LS: Ya, but surely that has not come down to us, if Aristotle has written it. But one thing he makes clear: it is better to offer *all* slaves as a reward freedom, emancipation. That is—what do you say to that in the light of book 1, of what we learned about slavery in book 1?

Student: Well, this is why I brought this question of the natural slave.

LS: Yes, that is absolutely necessary, but you should have not stopped so early. What is the natural slave?

Same Student: The natural slave was supposedly not capable of learning to survive. Hence, certainly Aristotle would not recommend that they should just be turned loose, because it wouldn't be doing them a favor and it wouldn't be doing any one else a favor.

LS: Very well. Now what follows?

Same Student: If he makes any reference to emancipating slaves, it seems to me that in a way he is in a difficult position because, for—one point I wanted to bring up which I spent some time on is that in his best regime he really has built a system which leaves leisure for citizens, which makes—somebody has to do the menial duties, this would be the slaves. On the other hand, he speaks of offering emancipation, whether it is because it is wiser to do that so they won't rebel or because it's the only justifiable thing to do, this seems to be a problem.

LS: Ya, but that is an understatement. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: Well, the thing is in question when Barker translates "wise," is it a word that's merely "prudent"?

LS: It's "better," better.

Mr. Reinken: Well, I think the good master turns the natural—educates the natural slave. And when he's through with him, he's not a slave.

LS: What do you say to that, Mr. . . .

Student: It can't be done.

LS: Why not?

Same Student: Because they're natural slaves.

LS: He is too dumb for . . . What I am driving at is a manifest contradiction to book 1. The slaves which Aristotle needs for his so-called ideal state are not natural slaves. But common sense could have told you that. These fellows who are so dumb that they can't count, say, beyond five, [they] are useless except for—I mean, you needed more supervisors than you have slaves. In other words, what Aristotle says implicitly [is that] you have to have slaves who are not by nature slaves. And you can even—I mean, you should bust the case wide open and say that the *polis* is then based on a certain kind of injustice: it makes people slaves who ought not to be slaves. A real understanding of the *Politics* would have to face that issue. That is very important for the whole question of natural justice, natural right. If the *polis* as such must transgress somewhere natural right, then natural right must be qualified, to put it mildly, in order to be politically relevant. That is a very great point.[2] People have said a lot about Machiavelli and Aristotle, you know, and the section on tyranny in the fifth book, that this foreshadows Machiavelli. That is not true, but this is much closer to what Machiavelli says, only still there are fundamental differences, but in this respect the difference is not as radical as it might seem. Of course one can try to get around it and say the way in which Thomas Aquinas interprets the first book,[ii] the doctrine on slavery, then it appears that according to that interpretation, which is I think not correct, that the conventional slaves are not unjustly slaves, meaning this: a conventional slave is a man who has been made a prisoner in war, and this is a benefice, because the alternative would be killing. Ya, that was the Roman law tradition of this time; maybe Thomas didn't figure that out. But I don't think that is what Aristotle means. And in addition, it would raise the great question, the more fundamental question: With what right can you kill people who have laid down arms? That's Locke's question.[iii] In the moment a man ceases to be a warrior, putting down his arms, do you still have a right to kill him? Yes?

Student: It's just a formulation of might makes right in the situation.

LS: Ya, you can say that, but it is more specific here because the specific legal principle appealed to is this: that slavery is a benefice of, let us say, international law, by virtue of which a defeated enemy is protected against annihilation. That is not Aristotle's thesis, I would say. Aristotle regards the slave who is not by nature a slave as a man who has been unjustly made a slave. That was very clear—yes, Miss Greenwald?

Student: He doesn't say that they are . . .

[ii] No such interpretation is found in Aquinas's *Commentary on Aristotle's* Politics. Aquinas discusses the choice between life and slavery for those conquered in war in *The Religious State, the Episcopate, and the Priestly Office,* chapter 10, but without reference to either Aristotle or the subject of the justice of slavery.

[iii] Locke, *Second Treastise of Government,* chapter 16, esp. section 182.

LS: No—

Student: Be offered . . .

LS: Sure. But I can . . . Aristotle says about lies.

Student: But to a . . . natural slave . . . a lie . . .

LS: . . . and has to take care of himself . . . No, no. In Aristotle—yes, Mr. . . .

Student: On the other hand, the offer may not be necessarily be a lie, and it's just that the slave fails to live to an old enough age to become emancipated . . . age sixty-five. [Laughter]

LS: Ya, but still. Yes, but you see Aristotle makes very simple rules: that obvious lies, ya?, obvious lies which are discovered very soon are extremely stupid and self-defeating. And you may have heard something about this subject in the last weeks or so.[iv] [Great laughter] Ya. But we are dealing with Aristotle. Did you want to say something? . . . only may repeat that: This question of slavery has a very great bearing on the fundamental question of natural right, and that is a point where one can dig much deeper than . . . Plato, who is generally speaking much more outspoken than Aristotle is**,** much less Jane Austenian [laughter] than Aristotle—Plato says in perfect frankness in the fourth book of the *Republic*, when he indicates the seven titles to rule which exist.[v] Ya? For example, father over son; [of] all the other things, he mentions this one: the right of the stronger, by which Plato means in all political rule which we find, this element of mere force enters. It is not the only thing, but it enters. But of course Aristotle too admits that when he says that people in favor of the regime must be stronger than those who are not in favor. "Stronger" does not necessarily mean numerically stronger, because that depends, as we know, on military techniques and other kinds of considerations [of] what constitutes strength. That is so, I mean, one cannot disregard that. Ya? I mean, unarmed justice is politically not necessarily effective, to put it mildly.[3]After all, there is a use of force, of legitimate force which everyone admits, but it is force, all right. And therefore there must be force around, and force enters. Plato indicates it, by the way, most simply: at the beginning of the *Republic* there is a brief scene where Socrates is kept in the Piraeus first by force. And then persuasion comes: "It is better for you to stay there because there will be a beautiful spectacle tonight."[vi] Now both elements, force and persuasion combined, are the secret of politics. And we call a free regime one in which the persuasion element is stronger than the force element, and the tyrannical regime where the proportion is different. That cannot be spelled out easily in numerical terms, in

---

[iv] It is likely that Strauss is referring to the U-2 incident of early May 1960. The US government made many false claims about a American spy plane downed in the Soviet Union that were soon exposed as fabrications, prompting the Soviet premier to observe that the Americans had said "many silly things."

[v] Strauss presumably means instead the third book of Plato's *Laws*, 690a-d.

[vi] 327c-328b

quantitative terms, but I think the idea itself, the thought itself is easily intelligible. Now you want to say something, Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Would there be a problem if he freed the slaves? Wouldn't that detract from the homogeneity of the *polis* . . .

LS: Ya, it would create a problem. But then in order to answer that question one would have to understand the obvious secret of Aristotle's best regime. Only then will your observation acquire its proper force. I am perfectly willing to state that, there is no harm done in stating a secret which is obvious. But you wanted to say something? No. All right, what is that secret? You remember in book 3 where the fundamental . . . was given, we had an argument in favor of democracy—well, not as universal solution, but if the *demos* has a certain character, a certain historically civilized [one], then a democracy, this kind where also the best men form part of the assembly, to say nothing of the ruling offices, and can make themselves heard: one could very well say that in such a society the collective wisdom of the citizen body, which includes the wisdom of the best members, could be said to be superior to the wisdom of any individual. You remember that argument? Now that was elaborated and everything seemed to be fine. We had our democracy, except it is not representative. And then Aristotle apparently without any reason begins to bring in the kingship. You remember? And then it works up to a point where the absolute king, wisdom incarnate, appears to be as the highest, as the divine most . . . regime, you remember that? And we were confronted with the absolute . . . Why did he not leave it at this wonderful democracy he had painted? And something must be different from Aristotle's point of view, and by studying the *Politics* as a whole we can find it. Every democracy, however good, requires the subordination of those who are by nature best to those who are not by nature best. That's clear. The decisions are made by the citizen body. That is against nature. I mean, it is also possible to state this in more practical terms, but I leave it now at this simple theoretical formula: According to nature, those who are by nature better should rule those who are by nature inferior to them. In other words, the city must be a hierarchic structure, and that is not sufficiently recognized in a democracy, in any democracy. So. But still, this kingship, on the other hand, we learn that rule . . . admirable as it may be, belongs somehow to the past. It is impossible once you have these large cities which you had in Aristotle's time. Then in book 4 [4]we received a somewhat different suggestion, which was in between the democracy and kingship, and that was the polity [LS writes on the blackboard] —the rule of the middle class, you can also say. This was in between. In between. And that also seemed to be perfectly satisfactory, politically speaking. But still this question always remains: those who are by nature best. And from this point of view—here you have, you can say, here you have the rule of the *demos*. Here you have no *demos.* All are subjects. No one is a citizen. In the polity you had something which was a qualified *demos*, qualified with property qualification and so on.

And now in book 7 and 8, Aristotle gives his account of the best regime. This is neither the democracy, nor kingship, nor polity: it is an aristocracy. An aristocracy. In other words, that is in between democracy and kingship, but closer to the kingship than the polity. But of course . . . What is the secret of that aristocracy? It is absolutely unique.

You remember throughout the work the discussion: the *demos,* the great problem; the mass, the multitude of free citizens who are poor and are therefore unable to acquire the necessary education, and then on the other hand, being free men, demand rights. That is the political problem for Aristotle. [5]How does he solve the problem in the best regime, [in] book 7?

Student: You mean through education?

LS: What does he do, what does he do with the *demos?*

Same Student: Well, he starts off with a very superior group of people . . .

LS: All right. What about the others, the craftsmen, the farmers and so on?

Same Student: They are not citizens.

LS: That's it, but what does it mean in political terms?

Same Student: They are ruled.

LS: Ya, but, more clearly: there is no *demos*. Aristotle solves the problem of the *demos* by abolishing it. Beautiful. Whether he meant it quite seriously or not, that might be a long question. But that is the open secret of Aristotle's *Politics*. He comes as close as possible to the best regime simply, the kingship, you know, but by this solution. So, well we will turn to that later. In other words, Aristotle's *Politics* is as "quote utopian unquote" as Plato's work—in a way even more, because in Plato's *Laws*, the only political work of Plato; the *Republic* is not a political work properly speaking you have a *demos*; you do not have it here. That's very strange. But let us now—

Student: I have a question—

LS: In other words, you have no *demos*, but you have slaves who do not deserve to be slaves. In other words, you replace one inconvenience by another. Generally stated, politics is a realm of inconveniences, ya? And you cannot get any political order which is free from inconveniences, which is not an unimportant lesson, not an unimportant lesson. By utopianism proper, I think we understand today a political order which is free from inconveniences. I mean, people say is the usual . . . they mean that. That's impossible, really. Now you wanted to say something?

Student: Yes, I wanted to say that . . . the class of slaves which as you say replaces the *demos*, the same mold that the *demos* is or that Aristotle thinks the *demos* . . .

LS: I am sorry, I have to read it out loud, that would be my answer to Mr. Faulkner's question. What you say amounts to the same thing. By emancipating the slaves, Aristotle seems to generate a *demos.* That is a great danger, sure. Either you perpetuate the injustice of having made people slaves who should not be slaves, that's one way of

solving it, or you try to be just: you bring in a *demos,* you gradually generate a *demos* which can be . . . But of course that is not so simple. You remember that, for example, a city like Venice was a rather restricted aristocracy or oligarchy for many, many centuries, because if people know always and are constantly reminded of the fact that they are freedmen or descendants from freedmen, and the others are sufficiently strong, they can last for some time. We must not forget that. But [6]nevertheless, it creates a problem of having people around who are not slaves and . . . who are not slaves, and indeed not legally citizens but who by their very bulk would make themselves felt. That problem exists. You were the one, yes?

Student: I'd like to know . . . [vii]what actually happens depends upon chance. And this looks . . . and this is why you didn't go into futher detail, and I wanted to know why . . . the planning of the city is so important if it depends chance, I didn't quite understand the—

Student 2:[viii] What was your question?

Student: Well, you mention all of these different factors that were involved in the planning . . .

Student 2: Aristotle says this, this is not my—

LS: Yes, sure. But that is perfectly simple. That's easy—

Student: . . . but then you said he didn't go into further description of this because everything depended on chance.

LS: Not everything. But look at this, there is a certain . . . most conducive to producing . . . of the city. Yes? But surely, then you know what to do under these conditions, but whether you get these conditions or not, that's not the end of your . . .

Different Student: This is the point I made in my last paragraph.

LS: Then we come to a passage very soon, let us postpone that and now turn to a coherent discussion of the first part of book 7. Now we must remember the context. The question is to construct the best regime, and not only to analyze it or to describe it, but how to establish it. And the theme is the best regime, and the best regime is that which is most conducive to the best life, to the most choiceworthy life. Let us see at the beginning, near the beginning in 1323a17, the beginning. The third sentence from the beginning of the book: "For it is proper that." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:

[vii] The student evidently wants to address his question to the student who read the paper at the beginning of the session, because it is the reader of the paper who responds to him.

[viii] "Different student" in this exchange is the student who presented her paper at the beginning of the session.

We must therefore, first of all, find some agreed conception of the way of life which is most desirable— (1323a19-21)

LS: No, the sentence before.

Mr. Reinken:
As long as that is obscure, the nature of the ideal constitution must also remain obscure; and we may thus expect that—unless something unexpected happens—the best way of life will go together with the best constitution possible in the circumstances of the case. (1323a16-19)

LS: Ya. In other words, here is already a reference to chance: if nothing unexpected or strange happens. That can [happen]: someone can live well and lead the most choiceworthy life in a very imperfect regime. That can happen. Socrates is the most famous example. Yes, that can happen. That is not rational. It is better if the whole order of society is so as to further the best life of the individuals. Now therefore we have then to raise two questions. First: What is the best life? And second: Is the same life, the way of life best for the individual and for the *polis*? We don't know that prior to the investigation. Then first the question: What is the best life? This is Aristotle's settling of the famous problem of value judgments. He does this in a few lines. Let us read them, a little bit later where you left off or begin—

Mr. Reinken:
The nature of the best life is a theme which has already been treated by us in works intended for the general public. Much of what has been said there may be considered adequate, and we must use it here. There is one classification of the constituent elements of the best life, which it is certain that no one would challenge. This is the classification of these elements into external goods; goods of the body; and goods of the soul. It will also be generally agreed that *all* of these different "goods" should belong to the happy man. No one would call a man happy who had no particle of fortitude, temperance, justice, or wisdom: who feared the flies buzzing about his head; who abstained from none of the extremist forms of extravagance whenever he felt hungry or thirsty; who would ruin his dearest friends for the sake of a farthing; whose mind was as senseless, and as much astray, as that of a child or a madman. These are all propositions which would be accepted by nearly everybody as soon as they were stated. (1323a22-35)

LS: Now let us stop here. There is no value problem. But the good life is—everyone knows that. Well, you have to be reasonably well off, in the first place; if you are starving or freezing to death, no one would call such a man happy. Also health and a reasonable condition of the body, and also goods of the soul. That's clear. Is there anyone who doubts that, that a man who has all these three things is a happy man? Elementary. Yes?

Student: What about the . . . debate on what is the good of the soul?

LS: Here? Is it not true that a man who is really frightened of everything, i.e., who is completely deprived of courage, must be absolutely miserable? Because there are so

many occasions where [he is] being frightened every minute: he cannot even be sure that his house will not collapse, to say nothing of someone shooting, taking a pot shot here and so. And the same applies to temperance and to other things too.

Same Student: . . . debate of what is happiness, on which all of these rest.

LS: No question. Really, no question. [7]We are in a false sense sophisticated. We forget that simple stratum underlying all the sophisticated questions. I am aware of the fact that there are certain difficulties, but practically, politically speaking, as we ought to do when we speak of political matters, the problem in this way is not that difficult. I would advise you to read in the first book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* the chapter on the good things. And since the sum of the good things is happiness, he gives an enumeration of that, and see whether there is anything in it to which you would not fully subscribe, although you are a twentieth-century American and Aristotle was a fourth-century Greek. For example, to have many friends is part of happiness. To have good friends: naturally part of happiness. To have children: happiness. That there are certain people who don't want children, we know that. But then we say that it is a special case, or in some cases we would even say something [is] wrong. And so that is simple. That this is—you see, you must not forget that there is a sophisticated level where all these things are in need of a more detailed investigation, but in political matters, as long as you want to understand the citizen as citizen, this sophistication is out of place.

Same Student: It seems to me that it is exactly in political matters where certain choices . . . statesman. This problem becomes greater than anything else—

LS: Yes, but on the basis of that, generally speaking men have this notion of happiness. And that they say: We don't get enough happiness if we—well, think of a policy: guns versus butter. What is the issue? The issue is that some people say, "We want to have the happiness of butter regardless of what might happen to the happiness of our children," and other people say the other way around. [8]I mean, I have no doubt that—but all these questions arise on the basis of things agreed upon. That's the point. The questions arise even earlier, as Aristotle will say immediately, but here we have only one point: happiness consists of three elements: external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul. What else do you want? Anything you can think of will fall under that. [9]But this gives rise to a very important question immediately, which Aristotle takes up naturally, immediately. But you had a point, you want to make a point?

Student: Well, it seems to me that since Aristotle is obviously right here that this may be a . . . but modern liberals basically accept this as an implicit premise.

LS: Unfortunately, only as an *implicit* premise. [Laughter] It is the sake of science not to make implicit premises. Especially if they are important.

Same Student: I agree, but it is unfortunate that it is only implicit, but I think that if made explicit a lot of the difficulty might be resolved.

LS: Ya, all right. Now let us see whether Aristotle has again our universal agreement when he goes on. Let us read the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
But differences begin to arise when we ask, 'How much of each good should men have? And what is the relative superiority of one good over another?' Any modicum of goodness is regarded as adequate—

LS: Of virtue, virtue. Ya, all right.

Mr. Reinken:
but wealth and property, power, reputation, and all such things, are coveted to an excess which knows no bounds or limits. (1323a37-39)

LS: You see, that is the immediate problem. Everyone admits that. But may I state to you the problem in the most simple manner? It's like this same formula from Aristotle's *Ethics*. Happiness: what is happiness? [LS writes on the blackboard] Aristotle says, Virtue plus equipment. Equipment, nice word. You must have some . . . in order to be virtuous. Good. And now there arises this interesting question. You begin, you start, you are not . . . a man, and the question arises: What has priority? And there are people who say: First let me get the equipment by hook and by crook, and then I will be virtuous! That's one way of doing it. That is the question which Aristotle means. Only some people take such a long time in acquiring the equipment that they can never . . . So that's the question: What's the proportion? If you think of the famous formula of Harold Lasswell—what [10][is] the unholy trinity of the political man? Do you remember that? Safety, income, deference. Safety. Pardon? Safety, income, deference.[ix] Aristotle doesn't speak of income, he speaks of wealth; income is only the modern equivalent of wealth, and so on. That is it. He doesn't even mention virtue, which I think is imprudent, because think of someone running for office, and the only thing we know about him [LS chuckles] is that he is concerned with safety . . . [laughter] and we would not elect him. So you would at least have to add that properly an implication of deference is deference to virtue, and therefore virtue would come in. So all right. But still that is the question; some people say, "Yes, surely you must be a decent man," but that is relatively minor. The main point is to be rich and powerful. Good. That is very difficult immediately. Ya? And now therefore we have to get the true answer to this question: Which is the most important of these three elements, or let us say two elements, virtue and the things which are not in themselves virtue? What does he say?

Mr. Reinken:
There is an answer which can be given to men who act in this way. 'The facts themselves make it easy for you to assure yourselves on these issues. You can see for yourselves that the goods of the soul are not gained or maintained by external goods. It is the other way round. You can see for yourselves— (1323a39-1323b1)

[ix] Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936).

LS: The other way. Do you see that? Do you remember? Does this remind you of something?

Student: Well, the *Apology*.

LS: Absolutely, the utilitarian argument for virtue. You want riches: all right, but if you lack virtue completely, you would not be able to keep the wealth for a single day, because wealth, in order to be kept, must be judiciously administered, but just judgment is virtue. And so on. Even acquiring requires some virtues. So that is a simple point, which I think must also be admitted. Now let us first read this whole argument of Aristotle. This is based on the deeds, as he says, on the acts and things which we see. Everyone can see that. Now the next point?

Mr. Reinken:
You can see for yourselves that felicity—no matter whether men find it in pleasure, or goodness, or both of the two—belongs more to those who have cultivated their character and mind to the uttermost, and kept acquisition of external goods within moderate limits, than it does to those who have managed to acquire more external goods than they can possibly use, and are lacking in the goods of the soul.' (1323b1-7)

LS: In other words, even if you assume what Aristotle regards as wrong, that bliss, felicity and happiness consist in pleasure as distinguished from virtue. Aristotle leaves that question open here. Even in that case, you will see that people who have a sensible temper are happier men than those who do not have a sensible temper. And therefore virtue, the sensible temper, is the most important element of happiness. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But the problem can also be easily solved if we consider it theoretically. (1323b7-8)

LS: Now theoretically means, that is a—if we consider it according to the *logos*, according to the reason as distinguished from observation of the facts or deeds. If we go back from the facts, which are always consequences of something, to the reasons, to the basic things. And that he does in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
External goods, like all other instruments, have a necessary limit of size. (1323b8-9)

LS: Now we begin to think—we do not speak anymore of riches and how wonderful it is to have mink coats and Rolls Royces and whatever it may be, but now we begin to think. What are external things? They are *means for* life. Means as means are necessarily in the service of something else. They cannot give us—as such they are limited. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Indeed all things of utility are of this character; and any excessive amount of such things must either cause its possessor some injury, or, at any rate, bring him no benefit. The greater the amount of each of the goods of the soul, the greater is its utility—if indeed it

is proper to predicate ‘utility’ at all here, and we ought not simply to predicate ‘value.’ (1323b9-12)

LS: The noble, the noble. Ya? In other words, what is merely means can never be strictly speaking noble. I mean, one can loosely say that something is noble—the Greeks say the same word as beautiful, but it is not strictly speaking that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
In general terms, we are clearly entitled to lay down this proposition: ‘The best state of thing A is to the best state of thing B, as thing A itself is to thing B.’ If, therefore, the soul is a thing more precious—intrinsically as well as in relation to us—than either our property or our body, the best state of the soul must necessarily bear the same relation to the best state of either our property or our body. (1323b12-16)

LS: In other words, the hierarchy of goods follows, this consequential point, the hierarchy of beings. So that if the soul is higher in dignity than possessions, then the good of the soul, virtue, must be higher in dignity than wealth. That’s clear. Let us take another example. If man is a higher being than a louse, the goodness of man is higher than the goodness of a louse. That’s clear. The question—let us first, if you don’t mind, let us finish that argument we are soon through . . . the next sentence. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Let us add that it is for the sake of the soul that these other things are desirable, and should accordingly be desired by every man of good sense, not the soul for the sake of them. (1323b16-19)

LS: Now furthermore, he says in this sentence, “Those things are by nature choiceworthy for the sake of the soul, and [therefore—I add therefore—LS], all well-thinking men must choose in accordance with that.” Wise choice, practical wisdom, follows the natural order of things. Follows the natural order of things. Practical wisdom is—of course other considerations enter on a subordinate level, but primarily prudence consists in choosing the good things according to the natural order of the good things. This is the argument of Aristotle by which he settles roughly the fundamental question. The good life consists in the good activity of the soul; and the other things, the good activities of the body, and property and other external goods are only secondary and are valuable only to the extent to which they contribute to the good activity of the soul. That is the view of Aristotle, naturally, but one can say that that has been the view of thinking men throughout the ages. I mean there are—questions arise [by] which things become complicated, but that is a kind of natural stratum of human orientation throughout the ages even today, although modern thinking does no longer allow of a theoretical expression of this view in these terms anymore. The natural hierarchy has gone, and many other things too. Now but Mr. Bartholomew, please express your dissatisfaction.

Mr. Bartholomew: Well, I—perhaps, I think that there’s a large section of modern people who accept this—

LS: Yes, sure, but let it—

Mr. Bartholomew: but would simply say this, that they will be the first to agree that the structuring of these goods, as Aristotle has said it, is the correct structure, yet they would say that while I agree with this and I see it this way, let us say, forgive the nasty word, but if I want to understand the behavior of a certain man in a certain situation, it is quite possible that he is operating in terms of a construct which is totally alien to this state, therefore this would falsify my looking at it.

LS: This can be easily be [11]answered. That there are people who do not act on this true order, no one knew better than Aristotle. Ya? Everyone knows that, and Aristotle too knew it. But now we want to study the man who prefers wealth to all other considerations. Ya? Aristotle says you can't understand that man if you do not start from the true order. True order . . . if you do not see the fundamental perversion in the mere wealth seeker, you do not give a true analysis of the wealthy. Surely we must have an analysis of the wealth seeker, of the seeker of prestige, with the various subdivisions, like name-dropping[x] and so—we must have that, by all means. Aristotle himself gave some sketches of it in his *Rhetoric*, and we should have it in the most detailed form, that's absolutely necessary. But this knowledge, so-called knowledge, is blind if you do not see simultaneously the particular vice inherent in that. For example, let us take the name-dropper . . . a mild form of vice. But you know these kind of people, what a name-dropper is. When you speak in ordinary language, "name-dropper" is a derogatory term, ya? Derogatory term. As a social scientist in the strict sense, you must not use derogatory terms, so you get a sterilized term, and call it perhaps "Type Four A Alpha." Ya? All right, Four A Alpha behaves in this way: no value judgment. But you must admit that you fool yourselves, because if you want to understand, you tacitly translate "Four A Alpha" into "name-dropper." Don't you understand? That's the point. There is no question that the empirical understanding of all kinds of human behavior is absolutely and necessarily desirable, if one has sufficient time for that. But the question is only how to approach behavior: Can you approach behavior intelligently without having a proper notion of the place of that behavior in the whole of possible human behaviors? That's one rather bad way of putting it, but that is the question. I mean—or take a more interesting subject, after all, because name-droppers are not such a political problem or a social problem, but for example, prostitution. Can you really analyze that without thinking about what prostitution does to the relation of the two sexes and the function of man's bisexuality? Can you do that? I mean, can you disregard that?

Student: . . . talking relations between the sexes, at least in one aspect this isn't a value problem. It doesn't seem to—

LS: Yes, but why do people generally regard prostitution as a social evil, which I think almost every social scientist who works on that starts on that premise unless they assume—whenever you speak of such a thing, you can even take something as neutral morally as the eyesight. You can't have distinguishing between people of normal sight,

---

[x] Strauss says "names-dropper." We have changed that throughout the paragraph to the standard phrase "name-dropper."

good sight, defective sight. There you have it, and you have it more importantly and more massively in the things which are dependent on the human will in the way in which the eyes are not dependent simply on the human will. That is a question. I mean, no sensible man, and least of all sensible men, Aristotle, had any objection to empirical studies. The question concerns only the *premises* of the empirical studies, because there is no empirical study without premises. Ya, I think that is today generally admitted. And the question is: What are the right premises? And can a neutrality as to good and bad, in the wider sense of the word, is this compatible with any understanding of social phenomena? I do not deny that there may be some very limited studies from time to time where you merely count, for example, and where no good or bad enters, anyway. But this can be done only in a very limited way; any interesting study, tolerably self-sufficient study of social phenomena always implies that. But, as I say, a scientific study must not keep important premises in a state of implicitness. It must set some force, it must make them explicit in order to enable anyone, the researcher as well as his victims, to form a judgment as to the truth of these premises. That alone is the question. And even if it were true that the people who [12]don't care for virtue but care only for safety, income, deference, are the ninety-nine percent majority—which I don't believe, but let's assume that—it would still be important of course for any *reasonable* judgment to know that, to know that ninety-nine percent of men are vulgar. It would still be important, even if it cannot be helped, if it cannot be changed. It has terrific consequences for our overall orientation, because it would lead to the consequence that in important matters we would not pay any attention whatever to what ninety-nine percent of people say, for example. That is an infinite question, but it is truly a question: it is not, as it is presented by the reigning positivistic superstition, a forgone conclusion. Yes, Mr. Bartholomew ?

Mr. Bartholomew: Isn't it a very different thing though say, that a certain . . . bliss is preferable to people like me who study philosophy or who have certain tastes than to say such and such is a true, or . . . it seems to me before true implied that a certain relation between . . . people who are not . . . it seemed to me that preferable to people who think like me . . .

LS: Yes, but that means simply—that only is a restatement of the positivistic view. There are noif —I may use the lingo, there are no objective principles of preferences. All principles of preferences are subjective. I know of course they would say that everyone has a value system, or his group of people, type of people has it, but there are *n* such value systems and it is impossible to say which is reasonable and which is not. That's the point. The question only returns. What Aristotle says, of course: it is not merely preference of certain individuals, but it is a preference of *reasonable* individuals, and this preference of reasonable individuals must have a title, and the title is the nature of things. Yes?

Mr. Bartholomew: Well, it seems to me that very intelligent, educated etc., people down through the ages have disagreed very fundamentally about such things, and it would seem that—

LS: Excuse me. That's not true. Who? Which sensible man ever said: Wealth is a higher priority than virtue? I don't know anyone.

Mr. Bartholomew: Well, then a sensible or reasonable man . . . agree with those people who—

LS: No, no, no, that's impossible for a thinking man, as you would see immediately if you would try to build your own life, including your evaluations, on the premise that wealth is the highest good. Only thoughtless people can do that.

Mr. Bartholomew: Well, a lot of people have built very . . . lives I would say that satisfied them on principle. Well, everyone agrees, or most people agree that wealth is instrumental, but not as many people would agree that pleasure is instrumental.

LS: No, Aristotle admits that, that is a more difficult question. And this discussion here is neutral . . . the issue between hedonism and the people who regard virtue as a distinct from pleasure . . . do you remember that? Because he . . . well, the most pleasant thing is virtue. All right, but that I think is theoretically still a problem, but for most practical purposes it amounts to the same thing as if he would say virtue is the most choiceworthy thing.

Student: It has been pointed out by Mr. Lipson[xi] that, and I think . . . As well that Marx and de Tocqueville had very different evaluations . . . complex phenomenon, still very different evaluations of the social fact of organized religion and a strong legal tradition.

LS: [13]Surely, that is immensely difficult question, the question of religion. That is not decided; we are speaking here only of virtue in a very simple sense. But if you take Tocqueville and Marx as a whole, surely you cannot—they had absolutely opposed views. [14]But both (that we must say in fairness to each of them) thought about their principles and they stated why. Marx's ultimate notion is that goodness consists in the development, in the full development of the faculties of each, which as such is not possible except in a society in which each and every member has his opportunity. All right, that is in a modified way what Aristotle says, because a free development is something like virtue, but with this great difference: that for Marx, the element of moral effort which is implied in the notion of virtue isn't there. Then we have to turn to this question: Is it possible to understand the perfection of man by assuming that under certain conditions this perfection will be forthcoming as it were automatically. And we have to go into that, sure.

Student: Tocqueville?

LS: Or in Tocqueville, I mean, and Tocqueville would substantially agree in these matters with Aristotle there's no problem.

[xi] Political scientist Leslie Lipson, referred to above in session 12.

Student: . . . was that although they disagree about the goodness in the positive contribution of the law in a religion or a good society or a good regime, they did agree on what the effects were, and it seems to me that the point is in this case you have social philosophers, social thinkers disagreeing on the value of goodness . . . happens, which seems to me to indicate that there is some kind of social investigation which is independent of . . .

LS: Not quite, I mean surely the question is this, and the ancients had the great merit of stating these questions in the simplest and most honest way. Somehow it is presupposed that this thing called virtue, or as Barker translates, "goodness" or "excellence," being the most important good, supplies you all the goods. And now there is plenty of experience that people who were virtuous perished by virtue of their virtue. In other words, the clever coward has under certain conditions greater opportunities to survive than an unclever brave man, and maybe even than a clever brave man. In other words, the recommendation you find so frequently, that it pays to be a brave soldier because the chances of being hacked to pieces on flight are greater than your survival if you fight on, that is surely ambiguous. But do you think there was ever any sensible man who didn't see that ambiguity and still thought it is necessary when you train soldiers and you have to reckon with fact that someone will get cold feet, and that is a very obvious possibility, that you have to make certain comforting speeches stressing the survival value of courage? That is a very easy problem, sure, but the question is then, would then come down—the whole problem which you have in mind is really implied in this very simple equation: to some extent the equipment is a condition of virtue, and therefore it becomes in a way prior. In a way. That leads to a great difficulty, surely, but that doesn't do away with the fact that you cannot suppress the most important element of . . . Because the experiment is very simple: take a society of men who has the most perfect technique of[xii] —in fact an attempt to load the dice in favor of the equipment people who don't care for virtue, and is a merely numerical device—you know, the more, the larger the number of people who vote for something decides the issue—of course works in the same direction. I don't want to hand down [to] you a doctrine—I wish I could—but my intelligence only would prevent a certain terrible narrowing of our theoretical horizon which is the consequence of positivism. I mean, how can you possibly handle the question of the so-called underdeveloped people if you do not have a horizon larger than that of a mid-twentieth century Western man, and in particular an American man? You must understand more human possibilities than are developed and fostered in our society. And one way of that is of course to study earlier Western thought, which did not yet have the peculiar narrownesses of our thought. It may have had *its* narrownesses, I don't deny that, but it surely does not have our narrownesses.

So it's by no means a purely theoretical question but has very much to do with all intelligent practice. It is not sufficient to talk to the westernized members of, say, Asiatic societies to understand Asiatic societies, because these westernized people may be the least able to tell us what the true basis of old China, old India, and so on was. And first of all, we must get rid of the blindness and be open [to the thought] that the categories we use now are not necessarily *the* natural categories. And study, for example, of Aristotle is

[xii] The tape was changed at this point.

helpful for that, because these were different categories and that alone is a help. But I think they also have the additional advantage that they are elementary categories, you know, they are not in a false sense sophisticated as so many of our categories are. Forgive me this relapse into the lingo, words like categories and so, but after all, we cannot always be very strict; that would make life unbearable. Yes?

Student: In reference to your question . . . I think Mr. Lipson would say that it is important to know that, for instance, the experience with the English law would probably be a very positive benefit.

LS: Yes, sure, but no one would question that—

Same Student: . . . that know this, because in part, because people with very different opinions on the value of the English law have the same results and effects upon people—

LS: I mean, I don't quite understand the problem and its relevance for our discussion.

Same Student: Well, the point was, it seems to me, that Marx and Tocqueville disagree violently at least on the value of the law and what it does to society in terms of values, and yet agree on specific behavioral effects.

LS: You mean now the English law as it exists in the nineteenth century, or what?

Same Student: Well, de Tocqueville—well, as modified by America, by the American experience in the nineteenth century, Tocqueville said . . .

LS: Which Marx never denied, of course . . .

Same Student: . . . points he makes, that Marx asserts this although he says it is bad, and what I was saying is that—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, but Marx didn't say it because he liked blondes in preference to brunettes or so, but Marx said this because he believed it is possible to have a classless society on the highest level, human level, higher than any human individual had ever reached in the past. On the basis of that alone does Marxian criticism make sense. So we have first to see, we have to investigate whether Marx's notion of the communist society is a rational criterion of criticism or a fancy. Before we know that we cannot pronounce on Marx's criticism of anything, not even on his criticism of women working under, in mines because it's connected with that—you know, his specific criticism.

Same Student: Yes, I agree. I would say that Marx is wrong, as wrong as he was, he agreed with de Tocqueville, I mean on specific facts.

LS: That—all right, because Marx was really not completely deprived of common sense, for example, and therefore that wouldn't help us. But you are speaking of a difference of opinion, a difference of value judgments. Yes?

Same Student: I was going to say . . . is the starting point—two totally different—they both approach the problem, the same problem with a set of values, let us say, with an idea—well, with an idea of what was the good and what was the bad. Can we simply say that, then?

LS: Ok, that even would not be clear—one would have to say they start from different opinions about the whole. But behind these—because it was not merely a question of values but a question of the structure of the universe as important. One can even go further and say one can discern behind Tocqueville and Marx certain common broad premises, a problem regarding the terms of which they would have agreed. And start and then understand the bifurcation and the reason why they deviated. This talk about values only leads to a neglect of analysis, to nothing else. You say simply that is the value of Mr. X and that is the value of Mr. Y, and that's that. That's not enough. You have to [ask] why? Why does he have this preference? And these preferences lead then back always to theoretical premises, and the theoretical premises have to be investigated. And if they are sound, then the conclusions of course also must be taken. If they are unsound or even unfounded, then the value of the criticism based on it decreases proportionately.

Same Student: Irrespectively, you have English law as modified . . . you have a set of social circumstances—

LS: Ya.

Student: Those are two things. Both Marx and Tocqueville looked at English law, and let's say that was A, and they said problem A followed B; they were saying something quite meaningful, it seems to me, about the end of these societies. Yet the point comes that apparently—and this is where you have I think introduced something new into the analysis—apparently they started with totally different ideas which got in their criticism of this situation, their criticism of an evaluation that was different, but they totally agreed on the actual relation.

LS: Well, I am sure that the same differences would also show in the analysis of factual things, as if people did not agree regarding facts as much [as] disagree, as they disagree regarding values. That is only the hope that men would eventually, or at least scientific men would agree eventually regarding facts. But there is a hope—there is of course disagreement regarding facts in every science, wherever you look. The distinction between facts and value seems to me only confusing, and the interesting problem regarding it is only: How did it come to possess the tremendous power it now possesses? And that question has never been properly answered by anyone, including myself, of course. I have now the impression that economics had more to do with that than anything else; that is the impression I gradually get. But that has of course its great history, because in the original scheme of economics, say, in Adam Smith, there is a balance of the morally undesirable effects of capitalist society with other considerations. But here the value judgments, the so-called value judgments, belong to the problem. They are not something which are arbitrarily introduced into the problem, they are there. I don't know

whether you have read Mr. Cropsey's study on Adam Smith,[xiii] where he brings this out very well, I think. Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: If the theoretical foundation of the natural order is now weak, or rather challenged by modern science—

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Faulkner: are we reduced then to the first of Aristotle's two arguments, that is, the argument from sight and observation, or a—

LS: Ya, that is the simple way of stating the problem. In other words, return to common sense and disregard the Aristotelian cosmology, you can say, or the Platonic cosmology. That will not quite do. And I believe the problem is this, still in practical terms: You have—well, let me state it as follows and I . . . That is a question we discussed in the very first meeting, and to some extent it is true, you say, that Aristotle's moral teaching is based on his cosmology. On his cosmology. And since this cosmology has been destroyed, and that we hear everywhere from the eighth year on, therefore this whole thing breaks down. That's easy. And ultimately that is of course what is underlying the fact-value [distinction], that is the real value, because this is, this here in the center [LS writes on the blackboard], has no place for good and bad, for complete or defective, or however you call it. And therefore, if all the other sciences are derivative from it, there cannot be any place for such a distinction in science.

Yes, now let us look at the other side of the picture. There is one theoretical science which is indeed a part of cosmology—"cosmology" I use now for natural science . . . There is one part of one science, a part of cosmology which is the immediate link between cosmology and modern political science, and that science is called psychology. [LS writes on the blackboard.] The characteristic of Plato's and Aristotle's cosmology is that they start in their cosmology, their account of the whole, from the soul and the mind. The characteristic of modern cosmology is that it starts from the inanimate beings and tries to ascend from that to the soul and the mind. Therefore the problem is concentrated in psychology. Is the psychology which is the alleged or real basis of the social scientist scientific? It does not become scientific by the fact that is experimental, and so on and so forth. That's a question. Is it possible to understand [15]the life of man, the life and the soul of man according to matter and on the basis of premises which are, stem from the study of inanimate beings, and in addition of the unintelligent beings, plants and brutes? That's a question. That's a question, but it is a real question, and no one has a right to say that it is settled by definition in favor of present-day scientific psychology, whether in the form of Watson and [16]Pavlov, of and other schools . . . psychology . . . now.[xiv] That is the question. It is a very great difficulty, a very difficult problem, and for people like me [an] absolutely insoluble problem, I admit. But there is the great difference between very great difficulties and absurdities. The absurdity

[xiii] Joseph Cropsey, *Polity and Economy: An Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith* (1957).
[xiv] John Watson (1872-1958) and Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) were behavioral psychologists.

has no reason to stand upon, however it may be recommended by certain prejudices, something very difficult should not surprise us, what gives us the right to assume that there are simple clues to the fundamental question? That's only another way of putting the same thing, but we have—yes, we must think of cause as the . . . because the *Politics* has much very to do with that. Yes?

Student: We can say [that] if a lot of people several centuries ago hadn't made all kinds of seemingly absurd assumptions about the universe which didn't quite fit in a pretty scheme that takes account of a lot of things, the kind of physics which you describe in Aristotle would never have arisen, and seemingly you can argue from analogy that a lot of people make this kind of assumption about human behavior, it is possible it will never—

LS: But the trouble is that it is absolutely impossible to show analogon to the great physical theories developed in modern times within the field of psychology as both scientific and . . . There are no such.

Student: Some people would say that an analogon to physiology in the . . .very undeveloped.

LS: Ya, we know that it is a blank check which is a new promise and renewed every time without anyone having knowledge whether there are any funds in the bank. So that is . . . But I am afraid—or I am happy, whatever you might say—that we must now return to the text. [Laughter] For Aristotle, the conclusion is this, then: the best life, or the . . . life is essentially one which man has through himself in the way in which he is not responsible for and cannot be responsible for the goodness of his body and his possessions.

Now after having reached this conclusion, Aristotle begins to discuss whether happiness of the individual is the same of that as the *polis*. You remember, that was an old question. First we have a very general notion, a commonsense notion: even the wealth-seekers will admit from time to time that wealth is only a means. You know? And speaking about other people, they will surely refer to that, they will only not act upon it. So after having restated that, so we know in a rough way or rather we are reminded of what we all know, Aristotle raises this second question: What about the felicity of the *polis*? Is this not something entirely different than the felicity of the individual? Aristotle says, [at] 1324a, that everyone will admit that they are the same. What do you say to that? And when Aristotle says this, we can't be certain that this was so, that no one questions that. Is it not a bit strange for us today, for would you say [that] wherever you find your happiness, you necessarily will find the happiness of your society? Would you say that? Or what does it still mean then? Would not a really religious man wish to have a religious society? Would not a sensuous man wish to have a sensuous society? Is it not true? Or is there a difficulty for us? What you never—let me state this: have you never heard the proposition that the morality of the individual differs from the morality of society or the state? You never heard that? Aristotle seems to deny that. I give you a formula which I remember

from Spinoza: the end or aim of the individual is liberty, the end of the state is security.[xv] Security. Different ends. So I think that has something to do with that problem I discussed on a former occasion, whether [17]the relation of happiness and the conditions of happiness, you remember, which leads then, if developed, to the distinction between state and society, [whether] that creates here for us to some extent a difficulty. But still, we still can understand directly, in whatever you find your own bliss for yourself, you would also seek . . . bliss of your society in that. That's Aristotle's assertion. But what is the controversy? Answer: the controversy is, Is the political life or the unpolitical life the best? That is first the question for the individual: Is the practical life or the life of contemplation the best? And secondly, Aristotle says, assuming that the political life is best for all or most men, which is the best regime? Now let us turn to 1324a19.

Mr. Reinken:
It remains to discuss whether the felicity of the state is the same as that of the individual, or different. The answer is clear: *all* are agreed that they are the same. The men who believe that the well-being of the individual consists in his wealth, will also believe that the state as a whole is happy when it is wealthy. The men who rank the life of a tyrant higher than any other will also rank the state which possesses the largest empire as being the happiest state. The man who grades individuals by their goodness will also regard the felicity of states as proportionate to their goodness.

Two questions arise at this point which both need consideration. The first is, 'Which way of life is the more desirable—to join with other citizens and share in the state's activity, or to live in it like an alien, absolved from the ties of political society?' The second is, 'Which is the best constitution and the best disposition of a state—no matter whether we assume that a share in its activity is desirable for all, or regard it as desirable for the majority only? (1324a5-19)

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This second question—unlike the first, which raises the issue of what is good for the individual—is a matter for political thought and political speculation; and as we are now engaged on a discussion which belongs to that field, we may regard it as falling within the scope of our present inquiry—as the other question can hardly be said to do. There is one thing clear about the best constitution: it must be a political organization which will enable all sorts of men to be at their best and live happily. But if that is clear, there is another point on which opinions diverge. Even those who agree in holding that the good life is most desirable are divided upon the issue, 'Which way of life is the more desirable? The way politics and action? Or the way of detachment from all external things—the way, let us say, of contemplation, which some regard as the only way that is worthy of a philosopher?' Here, we may say, are the two ways of life—the political and the philosophic—that are evidently chosen by those who have been most eager to win a reputation for goodness— (1324a20-33)

[xv] Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, trans. Elwes (chap. 3, p. 47)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here for one second, just regarding the question which we started. Here you can say there is—you see the specific premises or the prejudices of Aristotle. The value problem, if I may use this term, for Aristotle is limited to this: people who do not care for human excellence just are despicable human beings, and we don't pay any attention to them. But among the people who care for human excellence, there is a controversy. That alone is a value question. There, and here, what is that? And Aristotle says either the political life, the life of the statesman . . . or the life of the thinker, that is the question: Which has priority? Now today people would say there are *n* such possibilities among men caring for human excellence. All right, then one would—that is a sensible objection to Aristotle, whether he has not narrowed the problem. Where are the poets, for example? But what would you answer to that question about the poets? Where are they?

Student: Censored.

LS: No, the poets are in this general statement of the problem included among the philosophers. That becomes then the question whether the philosophers proper or the poets have the higher rank. That becomes then a question. But there are other things which he has omitted, as you obviously see. So Aristotle, in other words, returns from the question as [to] whether the political life . . . the best regime, he returns to the question: Is the political life or philosophic life the best? How does he reply? Now in the sequel—we have really no longer the time to read, I will summarize it therefore, and after that we must stop. Aristotle states now this question of the political or the theoretical life in its political form, the political or practical life in its political form is "imperialism." Imperialism. The political form of the theoretical life is nonimperialism. The case against imperialism is therefore by implication the case for contemplation.

Now what is the relation? Imperialism—how do we call that? The alternative to imperialism we should call autarchy. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Autarchy. Imperialism to autarchy, that's the political form of the question. [LS continues to write on the blackboard.] The political life to the theoretical life. The theoretical life is the form of the autarchic life of the individual. The political autarchy is the political form of the contemplative life. That may sound very strange to us, but that is crucial for Aristotle, as well as for Plato. Ya, but there is one great implication: moral virtue and the field of moral virtue is practically identical with the field of moral and pol[itical]—or practical or political life. There[18] is temperance, justice, courage, and so on; [these] strictly speaking have no place in the theoretical life. When we speak of intellectual courage, but that is not courage proper, we have to add "intellectual." We speak of intellectual temperance, caution, but that is not ordinary caution. We speak of intellectual honesty, intellectual honesty, but that is not ordinary honesty. So the theme of morality and the theme of the practical life coincide. But if this is so, there must be—if the equation is correct, imperialism here, and here morality [LS refers to the blackboard]—there must a "quote imperialistic" element in morality. Isn't [19]that strange? That we must understand.

Now morality is of course not a Greek word, and that used [is] virtue; or more simply, the most interesting of all virtue can be justice. Of justice, Aristotle teaches in the *Ethics* that

it is the only virtue which has not two vices corresponding to it, as courage, for example, has overboldness and cowardice, and temperance has intemperance or insensitivity to pleasure. In justice, the only virtue which has one opposite vice called injustice. Now let us see about that. What is an unjust man? A man who wants to have more than he deserves or than belongs to him, a man who desires to have more than is his or ought to be his. What is the just man, then? The man who is satisfied with what is his or ought to be his. But what about the fellow [20]who is perfectly satisfied with less than he has or less than he ought to possess? What about him? That's not a vice, whereas the insensitivity to pleasures—insensitivity to pleasures—is from Aristotle's point of view a vice, although not a punishable vice but it is [a defect]: a man who has no ears to hear music or no eyes to see beautiful sights is a defective human being. But a man who does not desire to have what is his, that's not a vice. That's not the same. A man who does not stand up for his rights, you can say. The unjust man stands up for things which do not belong to him. The just man is a man who defends what belongs to him. But the man who does not stand up for his rights as his rights is not a vicious man; it's no defect. Is that not strange? The implication of this is that in moral virtue as moral virtue, the element of self-assertion, of sensible self-assertion is included as a matter of course, whereas the theoretical man as theoretical man is free from that. That is the point, and you can say that is a fantastic notion but you can also say that the theoretical man in the Aristotelian sense is something like the saint in the religious tradition, however you may try to explain it to yourself, but here we are. And therefore the lack of self assertion against others is not a vice. Therefore there is an element of self-assertion, of aptness in the simple sense, which belongs to moral, political, practical men as a matter of course. It is not unimportant to consider that, I believe.

In other words, the virtuous city, which is not aggressive, which . . . which belong to that, is only a reflection of the man of contemplation, because being a city consisting of gentlemen, it has built in of course the element of self-assertion in them. It is diluted. Well, if I may use the word "saintliness," gentleman virtue can only be a diluted form of saintliness, which in this form stated is trivial. The problem consists in understanding the relation of Aristotle's theoretical life to saintliness, and they are surely not identical. One more point, in 1324b, shortly after the beginning. Do you have that, Mr. Reinken? "With some people this is the line drawn."

Mr. Reinken:
Some of the advocates of the practical and political life are willing to stop at this point: others go further, and argue that the despotic and tyrannical form of constitution is the only one which gives felicity; and indeed there are states where the exercise of despotic authority over neighbouring states is made the standard to which both constitution and laws must conform. It is true that, in most states, most of the laws are only a promiscuous heap of legislation— (1324b2-7)

LS: In other words, they are not directed towards one highest end. They just make laws as occasions arise, and there is no end or overall end of the legislation. Those who have such an overall end, what do they do?

Mr. Reinken:
but we have to confess that where they are directed, in any degree, to a single object, that object is always conquest. (1324b7-8)

Do you want me to go through the examples?

LS: Ya, that's short, ya? Like Sparta and Crete. Ya? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
In Sparta, for instance, and in Crete the system of education and most of the laws are framed with a general view to war. Similarly all the uncivilized peoples which—(1324b8-10)

LS: And so on. Now what do we learn here? There is not a single *polis* known to Aristotle which is directed toward human excellence as such. Either it has no direction, has no overall end, or if it hasn't any, it is that low grade end called power, superiority. Is this not a very great difficulty for Aristotle? The *polis* is according to nature, and according to nature it is directed towards human excellence. And not a single *polis* exists which is in fact directed towards human excellence. In other words, is the whole thing not absolutely utopian? That was the starting point of Machiavelli, this simple observation. And that has a certain force, and what is wrong with Machiavelli's beginning does not appear immediately; one has to think through the consequence, but here that is the strong point of Machiavelli at first glance. If there is not a single *polis* directed toward virtue, then the whole doctrine of Aristotle and Plato is wrong. There are imaginary . . . imaginary republics which they have described, that is what Machiavelli said. [xvi] We have not so much time, let us not fool ourselves with pipe dreams, and let us begin not with what cities *ought* to pursue, but with what they in fact pursue. Then you will get a realistic political science which will be useful. That was Machiavelli's point. And you see the ultimate consequence of Machiavelli in present-day social science, of course . . . that is, the somewhat more educated among them know. How do we proceed, then? What is the end that they all pursue? Well, let us say survival. And if—just mere being, and if possible, aggrandizement. That's so. All right, virtue doesn't play any role. It does come in, however, because they all talk of virtue all the time, and that is not entirely meaningless talk, but virtue cannot be understood as the end of the *polis*. Virtue must be understood as the means for the end of the *polis*. A *polis* or state cannot exist except if a majority of the citizens develop certain habits which we call virtues. But if these virtues are justified only by the *polis*, the *polis* itself is not subject to that. Is that not clear? If the virtues are only means for the *polis*, the *polis* is above them. And all the horrors for which Machiavelli is so famous, that the end justifies any means, you know, follows from that simple consequence. If virtue is not above the *polis*, if you might say so, but the *polis* is above virtue—or in our language, if virtue is a means of society, morality is a means of society—values, ya?—then the society is of course above the values. And a society can do with these values what it sees fit: if needs change and these values prove to be cumbersome, throw them out and forget about them. No holds are barred, except the good heartedness . . . supplied by the good heartedness of some social

[xvi] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter 15.

scientists, from which we must of course abstract in any theoretical consideration. And everything else follows from that.

You can still get some very powerful and interesting, and also historically very powerful doctrines. All typically modern doctrines, I venture to say, are based on this little thing, on this little change effected by Machiavelli—more or less complicated in different cases, but fundamentally that is so. That is the crucial point. And the starting point of Machiavelli is very impressive. I think it appears—to repeat, if the *polis* is by nature, and the nature is directed toward virtue, and there is not a single *polis* which in fact directs all its efforts ultimately towards virtue, what shall you do? One must try that. And I think that it has affected all social thought since Machiavelli in the most different forms, but you still can recognize it. And when it has disappeared from the overall picture of the good society, so that you have a good society which looks like the Platonic–Aristotelian good society . . . otherwise let's say formal structure, a shining end, then the question arises: How to get it? How to get it? And if the Machiavellianism doesn't enter the picture of the perfect society, it necessarily enters the thought people have of the *way* in which it is established. The high falutin' name for that . . . is the philosophy of history. The philosophy of history shows you the way, at least in the original version, towards the best society; and the philosophy of history teaches you that crime, stupidity, and everything bigoted and mean, fulfills the function of bringing about that beautiful final society. So that it is only the locus of Machiavellianism is, as it were, put in the way to the end as distinguished from the end, but fundamentally the same notion. And such extreme moralists like Kant, you know, who tried to restore the integrity of virtue to the greatest possible splendor, Kant is the one who teaches that the way to get the right society is passion, [21]and crime and this kind of thing. There is no other way.

The justification for Aristotle's seemingly fantastic suggestion, including his city without a *demos*, in book 7, is only that you think through the alternative, the modern type of doctrines, and see whether Aristotle has not got a point which is more important and which has been lost fundamentally in modern times, namely, the question that there is something higher than the *polis*, and what Aristotle seriously meant by that is of course the life of the mind, what he calls philosophy. That the *polis* ultimately derives its dignity from the life of the mind which is possible within it, and yet there is no clear, no possibly clear institutional expression of that. The rule of philosophers is a simple formula which is wholly unworkable, as Plato himself knew, and so there is no institutional expression of that. The modern solution is that you don't need expression of that: you give perfect freedom to the life of the mind, and that's all there is to it. That was not acceptable to Aristotle, for reasons which we may see next time. You know that is clear, the mind cannot be institutionalized. That is obvious. But the question is: Is this identical with unqualified freedom of the mind, or of whatever calls itself mind? Because the law is so crude as law that it cannot make a legally clear distinction between the mind or pseudo-mind, and you know what the people did who tried to do that, books larger than five hundred pages are scientific books and are not subject to censorship. You see, you must agree that this quantitative distinction is not a very intelligent solution to that problem. So next time we will take this up here. And thank you again, Mr. . . .

[1] Deleted "**Mr. Reinken:** . . . on page 3– **LS:** No, no, when he speaks about the –
[2] Deleted "that is proably one of the—I mean"
[3] Deleted "you know?"
[4] Deleted "we got"
[5] Deleted "what does"
[6] Deleted "it creates"
[7] Deleted "That—we forget these simple"
[8] Deleted "that is of course"
[9] Deleted "That is, now the question"
[10] Deleted "are the three"
[11] Deleted "replied"
[12] Deleted "don't give"
[13] Deleted "Yes, but that is, now you come to"
[14] Deleted "And the question is"
[15] Deleted "that"; "the the" or perhaps "that the" which is audable on the tape is here omitted.
[16] Deleted [Strauss]:"how is the name, the Russian?" [Student:] "Pavlov." [Strauss}"Ya."
[17] Deleted "the function"
[18] The original transcript had: "practically identical. In the field of moral or practical or political life there is"
[19] Deleted "it not"
[20] Deleted "who wants to"
[21] Deleted "that is"

Session 16: no date
How the city should be built; character of the best regime and its citizens

Leo Strauss: A few points points . . . in some of the papers. But first, Mr. Ben Cohen?[i]

Mr. Cohen: Yes?

LS: There are a few points in . . . some of the papers. The first, Mr. Ben Cohen?

Student: Here.

LS: There are two . . . which I would like to discuss that refer to what we discussed last time. You say that in order that the poor be raised up, a fund should be accumulated. The fund should be given to the poor in grants large enough to buy a plot of land or to start a man in agriculture or commerce. It is difficult to—that is correct, it is difficult to imagine that in an extreme democracy the rich will be willing to do this, even with the exemption . . . from providing useless public services, for it would seem, perhaps, that the rich would prefer to change the system to oligarchy so that they might rule in their own behalf.[ii] I suspect that there is here a kind of reflection of certain experiences in this country, the reactions to the New Deal, etc. But is your objection justified? What does Aristotle mean by that?

Student: Well . . . perhaps Aristotle literally assumes that the rich in the democracy will be in favor of the democracy, and in favor of it to such an extent that they will be willing to make large sacrifices for it, and I just wonder if this holds true for his time.

LS: Yes. Well, no, I would say from the context it appears that the situation is so that there is no ghost of a chance for the rich to establish an oligarchy. So what can they do? The *demos* is stronger than they are, that is the premise. What can they do in order to prevent the *demos* from going to extremes? The *demos* also must act in a certain way to prevent breakdown, but what can the rich do? And in this connection he makes this proposal. So Aristotle is not, as you put it—the problem, the limitations are implied in the statement of the problem. Then you say Aristotle . . . Carthage, for the use of this kind of devices as the only place that secured the goodwill of the people. However, Carthage is not an extreme democracy. Aristotle describes it in book 2, chapter 11 as being a sort of aristocracy with both oligarchic and democratic features, but the system has been advocated for use in extreme democracy. Now is there a difficulty that you can learn something from another regime which you can embody in an essentially a different regime?

Student: . . . Carthage is an example of this, whereas perhaps . . . extreme democracy as an example of it. Or perhaps there wasn't any, and—

---

[i] Strauss responds to students' papers.
[ii] Strauss seems to be reading from the student's paper, though it is not clear where the quotation begins.

LS: You know, you must not forget what he's trying to do, is not to present merely descriptively an extreme democracy but to show how an extreme democracy can last. And the answer is: it cannot last if it is simply an extreme democracy. So to some extent this was better understood by Miss Judith Field—the lady is not here? No? She says—now let me see, whether that refers to that immediately. No, there seem to be some other points. All right, she says in her paper, "Aristotle has theoretically made it possible for the philosopher, the man of internal activity, to live in the best state and even be its guiding principle; he seems to have decided that this type of state is actually impossible and forgets it, preferring instead a state which at least theoretically is not really best at all." Miss Field is not here? Well, I have to take this up anyway . . . Maybe there was another point? No, it was really not worth the while.

Now let us then turn to our text and begin with certain remarks in 1330b. The context is how the city should be built—you know, how the town, the central town should be built. Do you have that? In 1330b?[iii] . . . The town planner? Here is another reference to him, here.

Mr. Reinken:
The arrangement of private houses is generally considered to be more sightly, and more convenient for peace-time activities, when it is regularly planned in the modern style introduced by Hippodamus. (1330b22-26)

LS: Ya, in the modern style, or "the more recent," the more recent. Well, we know that Hippodamus[iv] not only was an innovator, he even developed the theory of innovation. You remember that. You will see what I am driving at. A little bit later, probably the next paragraph when he begins to speak about the walls: "Those who say one should not have walls." Ya? Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
It is sometimes argued that states which lay claim to military excellence ought to dispense with any such aids. This is a singularly antiquated notion— (1330b32-34)

LS: Ya, archaic notion. Old fashioned. [1]You see, here the question of modernity and antiquity comes up. Let us first get the whole evidence together, then we discuss it. At the beginning of 1331a, there is another reference.

Mr. Reinken:
the securest possible barrier of walls should be deemed the best of the military methods—especially to-day, when the invention of catapults and other engines for the siege of cities has attained such a high degree of precision. (1330b40-1331a3

[iii] An inaudible exchange between Strauss and Mr. Reinken follows, which evidently concerns where Mr. Reinken should begin reading.
[iv] Strauss misspeaks and says "Hippocrates."

LS: You see, we are now on the top of the world, in a way. That Aristotle says in his own name, of course. Now another passage, a bit later, 1331a14 to 16.

Mr. Reinken:
It is always the concern of the offensive to discover new methods by which it may seize an advantage; but it is equally the concern of the defensive, which has already made some inventions, to search and think out others. An assailant will not even attempt to make an attack on men who are well prepared. (1331a14-18)

LS: That is all we need. You see we find here Aristotle praising his own time as technically superior to the past, and even recommending further innovations. And that seems to be in contradiction to that conservative backward-looking position he took in book 2 when he took issue with Hippodamus. Do you remember that? That is very important to understand—as a matter of fact, of crucial importance. Now before we say Aristotle is simply guilty of inconsistency, let us first see in what connection he recommends inventions and innovations. Well, what's the context?

Student: Good regime.

LS: No, that's much too general.

Student: Military . . .

LS: Military. Absolutely, military. Yes. Now let us try to elaborate that point. The good city should have the proper kind of laws and customs—if possible, the best—and then should not change them. And a minimum of change. That is very well. And you have then an old tradition which becomes deeply ingrained in the course of generations by virtue of the absence of change. But there is one sphere where the city cannot possibly do it. Let us take a city ruled by gentlemen: nice, decent people who don't deviate from the ways of their fathers and forefathers. Then you find in the neighborhood [a] city of very tough innovators who don't care for virtue at all but for wealth and power, and they innovate as much as they can in all respects, and therefore also in military respects. And what will happen at the next war? The good city will be subjugated and perhaps even destroyed. Can a reasonable member of the good city accept that? No. They must imitate the wicked city. Yes?

Student: But this would assume that the sphere of military technology is very easily separable from the sphere of technology in general—

LS: We do not even have to go so far. That is perfectly true, that technological change, even [if it is] limited, we will not know where it will lead to in the end. Surely. But let us limit ourselves to this simple problem: they try to have a separate compartment, as it were, a military compartment including military technology, and there they innovate, but in all other matters they follow the ancestral ways. But what does this mean in principle? That the wicked city imposes its law on the good city. You are quite right, because the

things won't stop at military technology, but even if it would stop there, we would have this situation.

Now that is exactly again the point which Machiavelli made, only in Machiavelli there is a strange mixture of caution and inciting brutality. He didn't state it as simply and soberly as I tried to state it, but said—how is the formulation, Machiavelli, in the *Prince*? [2]Those who wish to be good cannot be good in a world in which there are so many bad men.[v] That is in a sense the principle of Machiavelli. Goodness is impossible. Goodness is impossible because there are so many bad men, and the bad men impose their law on the good. That is, one can say, if one tries to understand Aristotle, I think—and so many objections which one makes to Aristotle are valid only once one accepts principles which Aristotle rejects. You know? Say, if you criticize Aristotle from the point of view of present-day democracy, then you argue from premises which Aristotle rejected. The only difficulty of which I am aware which really is built-in in Aristotle and has nothing to do with principles extraneous to Aristotle is this: that by virtue of the facts of foreign policy, the good city, the best regime, or however you call it, is absolutely limited. It is in a way dependent on the bad cities. Do you see the significance of that point? Here is the real inherent weakness, and Aristotle could of course say that is not a weakness inherent in his doctrine, that is a weakness inherent in any human order. You know? But how would Aristotle nevertheless—why did Aristotle not draw the conclusions which Machiavelli drew? Why could he say from this fact that there is such an influence of the wicked on the good? Why could he say this does not lead to the consequence that the whole notion of the good city is impossible? How could he do that? We have to then go a bit more closely into the question of military technology. I mean, I am not thinking of terribly technical things, but these rather obvious things.

Student: The simple answer might be that all this means is that the *polis* can be good to up the extent to which it can defend itself.

LS: But since here in this respect—you see, you have here the principle of innovation, of innovation admitted; and with a view to the innovations made by others, you can control the internal actions of your citizens, you cannot control the actions of other cities unless you conquer them, and which would bring another difficulty, the difficulty of imperialism, you remember? Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: . . . essentially minor in extent, technological advance . . .

LS: Ah hah, that's it. Yes, but why were—that's very good, why were the inventions of which Aristotle thought were very minor of extent, and with what right did he assume that?

Mr. Faulkner: Well, technology in his day was a very different thing from technology in our day in that it was pretty much was a piecemeal thing. There wasn't a large body of theoretical knowledge on which it was based, and then a snowball effect: a little innovation here, a little innovation there. It was an art rather than an engineering . . .

---

[v] *The Prince*, chapter 15.

LS: And why has technology, military technology, ceased to be a piecemeal affair and become a methodic enterprise?

Mr. Faulkner: Because the shared relationship between technology and science?

LS: Yes, yes, what did Aristotle believe about, think about science?

Student: It was part and parcel with philosophy.

LS: Ya, it was theoretical. In other words, science has no practical, productive function at all; and no scientist who understands himself as a scientist would do that. We have the beautiful story of Archimedes, you know, one of the greatest scientists of antiquity, when he was roughly compelled in his home town, Syracuse, to do something for the defense of the city against the Romans.[vi] But he regarded—and he made fantastic inventions on that occasion, but that was for him something which was a kind of citizen duty, which had absolutely nothing to do with his true interest. So for Aristotle science is theoretical, and therefore technology in our sense, which somehow presupposes science, was an impossible notion; whereas in Machiavelli this new notion is already emerging. That's one point.

Now that is surely of the greatest importance, the different understanding of science, and therefore the problem doesn't arise. But there is also another point which one must mention, and that is what one can call [3]colloquially Aristotle's notion of history. What does that mean? For Aristotle, divisible . . . is orders . . . come into being and perishes. We assume . . . philosophers assume that the visible universe has always been: the sun and the stars, and cats and dogs, and men. And that is a very reasonable idea in itself[4]—unfortunately, it doesn't seem to work[5]—because otherwise you are confronted with the question of how could a man be a first man, a man not generated by men. You see? I mean, what you see all the time is that men generate men, cats generate cats. Either that's an absolute miracle, yes—that's [6]of course the biblical view, ya, but that's hard to accept for scientists and philosophers and such. So the other people have to assume a kind of miracle without admitting the possibility of miracles. The Aristotelian view is really the only rational view in this, you know? Simply rational view. Good. But still, the universe has always been, will always be there, but there will not always be civilization, as we say. There are periodic cataclysms, say, floods, deluges, earthquakes, whatever it may be; and this takes place with a kind of natural periodicity. So immense trees will never grow into heaven; there will always be men. There is a kind of strange beneficence of nature which prevents man from overreaching himself. This is also a part of the same Aristotelian view; therefore the question does not come up, the question as we know it today. Good. But this is a serious difficulty. Now we—is there any other point regarding this question which you would like to discuss? Yes?

[vi] See Plutarch, *The Life of Marcellus* 17, for the story of Archimedes's noble death; for Archimedes's resourceful inventions, see Polybius, *The Histories* 8. 5-8.

Student: . . . the kind of technology Aristotle . . . isn't it true that different parts of military organization would require a . . . different organization? If your enemy . . . you have a big fleet or something, and you have to break up a fleet—

LS: Yes, sure, we know that; Aristotle knew that very well, what the navy did to Athens, I mean, that the Athenian democracy was almost inevitable by virtue of Themistocles's famous decision to make Athens a naval power. But still in some way that could perhaps be mitigated. But surely Aristotle knew that, and therefore that was the burden of his argument against Hippodamus in the second book. Would he recommend innovations? And how can you have stability if you have constant innovations? You know? This difficulty of course is very important in modern times, and somehow we believe that you can have a stability in the midst of change by having a kind of expanding constitution. That people don't say, of course; [7]they speak of an expanding economy. But somehow the question at one point or another may well become a question of an expanding constitution. Now to some extent this expanding constitution is of course an old story, because the very notion of constitution as we have it, as a fundamental law as distinguished from ordinary laws, implies of course provision for very speedy and very comprehensive change. You know? The constitution gives always a framework, and within the constitution you can do almost anything. So this question is truly of the utmost importance.

Now we turn to a few other passages. In 1331b17, there is a remark about the character [8]of the best regime, when he speaks about temples in the countryside, do you have that? Some for the gods and some for the heroes.

Mr. Reinken:
But it would be a waste of time to linger here over details and explanations. It is easy enough to theorize about such matters: it is far less easy to realize one's theories. (1331b18-21)

LS: Ya. Well, "it is not difficult to think such like things, but rather is it difficult to do them." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We talk about them in terms of our wants, but actually— (1331b21-23)

LS: No, that is very bad. What follows, the speech—the speech, the thinking, the blueprint, that is a matter of wishing, and wishing is easy. But that it should happen, that it should take place, is the affair of chance.[9] Now this is an important remark about the character of or the status of the best regime. I will try to explain that. From the very beginning, this very simple thought: in all political action, you are concerned either with preserving or with changing, and you preserve what is worth preserving, what's good as it is, and you change for the better. That's the general, simple notion. Now it's true we have all these notions of good and bad in all political action, or rather of better or worse to begin with, but you cannot speak intelligently of better and worse without some notion of what is good and bad. Let us assume it is possible to replace these opinions about good

and bad, to replace them by knowledge of good and bad. And let us furthermore say that what we mean politically by good or bad, if fully spelled out, is the good society, or bad society on the other hand, so that every particular political good we have in mind ultimately forms part of a whole which we call the good society. Therefore, if we want to act rationally, we should have clarity in our minds as to what constitutes the good society. Aristotle says "the best regime," which is the same as what we mean by good society, only he puts the emphasis on the crucial importance of government. The good society can only be such a society in which the best men are habitually in control, and therefore the good society, the best regime.

But this best regime does not necessarily exist. It is something which we presuppose in all our political judgments, dimly, which we do not elaborate ordinarily but which we somehow imply, and now we elaborate it. It does not necessarily exist, but nevertheless, it is the object of a wish, of a reasonable wish. What we desire, what we reasonably wish must be—[10]since we are reasonable men by definition, we reasonably wish—must be possible. Otherwise we are crazy if we wish the impossible. "Possible" means much more than [that] it does not involve a contradiction: it means that it can be shown to be compatible with the nature of man and with the fundamental needs of men in their proper order. But to repeat, this possibility, this compatibility with the nature of man does not guarantee actuality. Aristotle presupposes, just as Plato, throughout work that as far as he knows the best regime has never been actual, but it *could* have been actual. That is then the precise theoretical status of the best regime: that it is possible but not necessarily actual. And therefore as such it exists only in speech, as they say. "As such": that's of its essence. We could say that as such it is essentially a blueprint, because a blueprint is only somewhat more familiar expression for what the Greeks meant by speech. Whether it is indeed actual is in no way essential, although we would wish it. But it does not depend on us whether it is actual or not; it depends on things which are beyond our control: it depends on chance. And Aristotle makes this remark here regarding a very special case, for example, how the various buildings, and especially holy buildings in the countryside should be erected, he would say: Well, every sensible man on the spot would immediately see what is the wisest arrangement. That's easy. But to get it done, that's a great difficulty because you may not have such a desirable countryside where this can be done. Because there was some difficulty in the paper last time about, I think, you, Miss Greenwald had some difficulties, or who was that? Oh, you had some difficulties about it. Is this now clear, what he means by that? We have to come back to the question of chance later on, but for the time being we can leave it at that. Yes? Mr. Bartholomew?

Mr. Bartholomew: Chance is morally neutral.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Bartholomew: Chance is morally neutral.

Student: Well, how would it be possible to say that there exists such a thing as a bad *polis*? The conditions that create . . . no fault . . .

LS: Yes. Well, all right, but the *polis* as *polis* is not for Aristotle a person. That was underlying that discussion we had last time, I believe, that the end of the *polis* must be the same as that of the individual. If the *polis* were a person but not an individual—for example, a person which does not eat and drink and die, and is not generated, then it could have an entirely different end than the individual. But since the *polis* is only a multitude of persons, the *polis* as *polis* cannot be said to be morally responsible. That can only be true, for example, of the governors, the regime and so on.

Now if you have a bad *polis*—for example, let's take a tyranny. Who is responsible for the tyranny? If you take the simple case where every man would say it is a tyranny, who would be responsible? Who would be blameworthy? The tyrant. Aristotle implies, and he said so somewhere, that a tyranny in a strict sense is *simply* bad. I mean, there is no justification for that under any circumstances. If there would be a situation in which centralized government, extremely tough centralized government (you know what we loosely call today) would be necessary, then that is not a tyranny strictly speaking. Then one would have to . . . In other words, necessity excuses, but true necessity. Pretended necessity does not excuse, as you know: if someone says "I had to hold up this man because I want to take my girl to a night club," that is a pretended necessity, but if it is a matter of true life and death for the individual, it is a genuine necessity. Necessity excuses. But you must also turn it the other way around: what is excused by necessity is in need of excuse; it is not intrinsically good. But let us take a man who has lived in necessity, in duress his whole life, and therefore he had to do all kinds of undesirable things. Then he is a worthy subject of compassion, but you will never say: "Look at this man." Therefore [11]that is quite true, one needs [a] tolerable minimum of favorable circumstances for a life which deserves to be called human. If this is a harsh assertion regarding the limitations of morality, I think we cannot well avoid it. Think of a man who was brought up absolutely impossible . . . slum and other surroundings, and was then at an early age framed, so that he came into [a] reformatory (and that is not such a healthy reforming thing, as you may have heard)—you know, by a chain of accidents of this kind, so that any good intentions, any good heart which he might have would become wholly ineffective throughout his life. Such a thing is possible, at least from Aristotle's point of view. In other words, if you put it this way, that there is a certain minimum of good luck needed for virtue, I think Aristotle would say yes. To repeat, there is a great difference between pretended necessity and genuine necessity. But I would be grateful if you were to restate your difficulty.

Student: . . . chance.

LS: Well, we come back to this question a bit later, the question of chance. That is of the utmost importance: the whole doctrine of Plato and Aristotle, the classical doctrine is inseparable from the notion of chance. There is no question about that. And of course that created a very great difficulty in modern times, especially in the formative stratum, seventeenth century and so on, where determinism somehow was taken for granted. But determinism doesn't dispose of the difficulty. One can show it very simply by the simple example used by Aristotle, the simple example which everyone knows: I go into the garden in order to dig potatoes, and I find a treasure. That's chance. I did not go into the

garden in order to find a treasure but to dig potatoes, and yet I found it. Now if I say, "Oh, that is folklore": two causal chains: one, that which led me to dig potatoes, and then that which led the other fellow a hundred years ago to bury the treasure, just . . . and so on, absolutely determined. That strangeness does not cease for one moment by your following up this chain of causation ever more. The mere fact of *coincidence*, coincidence—what we can understand and must try to understand is the possibility of coincidence, that such things are possible. But we cannot explain the individual case any more if we go beyond the statement, "it so happened," and no deterministic doctrine can do away with that.

This word "coincidence," by the way, [12]is used by Plato in the key passage of the *Republic* when he says, "Evil will not cease from the cities unless philosophy and political power coincide."[vii] There is nothing in the nature of philosophy on the one hand, and of political power on the other, that they should come together. But they *may* come together. There is no intrinsic impossibility. Therefore, whether they come together or not is a matter of coincidence. If you go beyond the general assertion of determinism which is of no help but again to show the necessity, the chance-less necessity in concrete terms, then you can see that people cannot avoid it. Trotsky's discussion of the Russian revolution[viii] is very revealing. He takes up the question: What would have happened if Lenin had not come to Russia in that famous sealed car? After all, he could have died or he could have been assassinated: any *n* things are possible. With much hemming and hawing, he admits that the Russian revolution as we know it would not have taken place. In other words, the objective problems would have remained the same, and they would have called for a solution according to Trotsky along the same lines. But when? And whether there would have been a man around with that particular ascendency which Lenin possessed, no one can know, and Trotsky doesn't claim to know. This element of chance one cannot disregard. One can perhaps say [that] by certain laws or great numbers these various things cancel one another out. One can say that. But this element of irrationality is essential and leads to grave consequence, also we will come to that later. Now let us turn to another passage in 1332a7.

Mr. Reinken:
It has been argued in the *Ethics* (if the argument there used is of any value) that felicity is 'the energy and practice of goodness, to a degree of perfection, and in a mode which is absolute and not relative.' (1332a8-11)

LS: Now let us first—"energy" is of course wholly unintelligible word today, because energy through its physical meaning has changed completely. *Energeia* means to be in action, in actuality. In actuality. For example, the dancer is in action, in *energeia*. If he dances, if he stands around or is about to dance, he is still a potential dancer, if in a very proximate potentiality. Whereas a young child who cannot dance is in a very remote potentiality a dancer, and in someone who cannot dance at all perhaps the potentiality

[vii] *Republic* 473c-d.
[viii] Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman, 3 vols. (1932), see especialy volume 1, chapter 16.

approaches zero. Yes, virtue is actuality of virtue and the use of virtue. Now he explains that, what that means, not hypothetically or based on a premise but simply. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
By 'relative' we mean as mode of action which is necessary and enforced; by 'absolute' we mean a mode of action which possesses intrinsic value. Consider, for example, the case of just actions. To inflict a just penalty or punishment is indeed an act of goodness, virtue;[ix] but it also an act which is forced on the agent, and it has value only as being a necessity. (It would be better if neither individuals nor states ever needed recourse to any such action.)[13] Acts done with a view to bestowing honours and wealth on others are in a different category: they are acts of the highest value. An act of punishment is a choice of something which, in a sense, is an evil: acts of the order first mentioned have an opposite character—they are foundations and creations of something good. We may argue, along the same line, that while a good man would handle well the evils of poverty, sickness, and the other mishaps of life, the fact remains that felicity consists in the opposites of these evils. The truly good and happy man, as we have stated elsewhere in our arguments on ethics, is one who by the nature of his virtue[x] has advantages at hand which are *absolute* advantages. It is plain that his use of such advantages must also show an absolute goodness, and possess an absolute value. But the fact leads men to think that external advantages are the *causes* of felicity. One might as well say that a well-executed piece of fine harp-playing was due to the instrument, and not to the skill of the artist. 1332a11-28

LS: Now let us stop here. Can you see that point now? Let us compare virtuous activity to something analogous to it. Virtue is human excellence. Let us compare it to another excellence, the excellence of flute playing or harp playing. Harp playing is impossible without a harp, and whether a man who does not have, possess a harp, or at least to have it at his disposal, is or is not a harp player can never be known. He certainly may not know. So virtue is in need of instruments, of tools, and without these tools, no virtue. But that does not mean of course that the virtue is *due to* the tools. That would be absurd. Then everyone who owns a harp would be a good harp player. And that is the absurdity of the rich as rich, that they think by virtue of the fact that they have the instruments of virtue, they are virtuous, which is clear nonsense. But on the other hand, also the need for the external goods to play on. You can say virtue is—I mean, if you use Aristotelian . . . virtue means playing well on the external goods. But that presupposes external goods of some kind. Do you see that? We have certain difficulties in understanding because the modern doctrines with which we are most familiar are rather silent about this aspect. Or when they come in, they come in in a discussion, for example, say, of the importance of slums and other bad conditions on morality. You know? That is of course admitted; in this way we still understand it from present-day discussions, that there are conditions so unfavorable as to make it practically impossible for any ordinary human being to become a decent human being when he comes from such circumstances.

[ix] Mr. Reinken adds "virtue" here.
[x] In Barker: "goodness"

But I wish you would spell out your difficulty clearly, for this reason, that is one reason why Aristotle, and Plato too, think that moral virtue cannot be the highest excellence of man because of its intrinsic dependence on the availability of tools, of instruments. And therefore—well, there's a discussion in Plato or in Xenophon on Socrates. Socrates the poor man: but Socrates, why was he able to be a good man although he was poor? Because his virtue was not the kind of virtue for which you needed tools. It was the theoretical virtue. We should understand that, because that is to begin with a very great difficulty. For example, I mean, to say nothing of the biblical tradition, for example, in the Stoic teaching—you know the slave, the man in fetters in prison, who is a perfectly virtuous man: you know this figure with which we are all so familiar. So no need for anything external, not even for health, of course. But one thing we forget, however—and that is true, that the Stoics teach that, but one must never forget that virtue as the Stoics understand it always implies theoretical wisdom as a part. That is overlooked in the vulgar, ordinary notion of Stoicism. If you speak of the biblical tradition, I think you must then always make a distinction [14]analogous to that philosophic distinction, a distinction between saintliness or something of this kind and simple moral virtue. And saintliness [15]is of course infinitely rare compared with moral virtue [which] is something of which almost all people, as Aristotle would say, are capable. That requires conditions. That is truly essential, because a consequence of that is of course the aristocratic teaching of Aristotle. You see this immediately: if virtue requires tools, instruments, equipment, then not all men can be virtuous. All those who lack equipment cannot be truly virtuous, and therefore democracy is absurd.

So there is a connection obviously . . . central for Aristotle, therefore we must try to understand that. Did you understand the first part, why Aristotle speaks here of the simply good as distinguished from the good and the conditions, or relatively good? Let us take the extreme case: a man has committed a crime. Then he is caught, or maybe he repents, and he is justly punished and he bears the punishment. In a way, he commits the just action. I mean, it is inflicted on him, but he accepts it as justice. Aristotle says: Well, that is not in itself a virtuous act; it is better than to run away from punishment. But it is not; you wouldn't call a man virtuous whose life consists of a chain of such actions. Aristotle goes beyond it and says: Even the actions inflicted on him by fair judges, the punitive acts, they also are not simply noble because of their relativity to that evil, the evil of punishment which he inflicts. That is one of the passages which makes intelligible to us a distinction which is crucial for the classic understanding of morality. You see, the Greeks have no word for morality as we use it. They speak of the noble and the just things. The noble and the just things. This distinction is essential, between the noble and the just. For example, you undergo punishment: deserved punishment is just, and you admit that it is just. But surely, to undergo just punishment is not noble. There are other examples which one can make. Here the distinction is of course blurred when one speaks of morality generally, and therefore, one other way of putting it is, as Aristotle says: virtuous actions simply and virtuous action relatively, qualifiedly. Do you have the passage? Can you continue where you left off, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

It follows from what has been said that some elements of the state should be 'given,' or ready to hand, and the rest should be provided by the art of the legislator. (1332a28-29)

LS: By the legislator. Is it clear? We are not trying to establish the best regime. And this man who established the best regime is here called by Aristotle the legislator. The legislator is not a governing body, a legislating body as it is now, which is constantly in session. He has in mind the founding legislator, like the founding fathers; something like that. Whether that's an individual or a group is of course not an essential difference. Now this founding legislator is in a way an artisan. The product of his art would be the perfect regime. But, as every other aristan, he needs material. He needs people, he needs a territory and so on of the proper character which Aristotle discusses here. And some things must be available to the legislator which he cannot produce, as little as a carpenter produces the wood. But other things, the most important thing of course is what he, the legislator, does to that material. That is the legislative art. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We may therefore pray that our state should be ideally equipped at all points where fortune is sovereign—as we assume her to be in the sphere of the 'given.' The virtue of the state is a different matter: here we leave the realm of fortune, and we enter the realm of human knowledge and purpose. A state is virtuous in virtue of the virtue of the citizens who share in its government. In our state all the citizens have a share in the government. We have therefore to consider how a man can become a virtuous man. True, it is possible for all to be virtuous collectively, without each being virtuous individually. But the better thing is that each individual citizen should be good. The virtue of all is necessarily involved in the virtue of each.[xi] (1332a30-38)

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. You see here in passing that Aristotle's best regime is an aristocracy, if any proof is needed, because the virtue of the citizen coincides with the virtue of the man. But that is not for us the main point. Here we have another remark about the power of chance . . . Chance. Virtue as such can never be a matter of chance, virtue as such. But the conditions of virtue depend on chance. For example, that a man who died this morning is incapable now to perform virtuous actions is clear. Why is he unable? By something which happened to him: he died. There can be other ways in which a man is prevented from acting virtuously, illness or duress or what have you, that is not under his power. Virtue as such is in a man's power, but not the conditions of virtue.

This distinction is not sufficient between chance and art, chance and human art. But at a first glance it is the most important distinction. To take an example from Xenophon: you want to have an orchard, and you must know something about that, and you do it in the proper way, according to the rules of the art. But the end of what you are doing is of course not the planting of the orchard but the enjoyment of the orchard. The art which you possess does not in any way guarantee the ultimate end, namely, the enjoyment of the orchard. You may die after having completed the orchard according to all the rules of that art. That was the way in which the ancients understood the art of divination. The art of divination was meant to be the completion of every possible art. The outcome—the art

[xi] Throughout the passage, Mr. Reinken substitutes "virtue" for "good" and "goodness."

can tell you what to do in order to achieve this more immediate end, say, the planting of the orchard, but that the ultimate outcome in which you are interested, namely, that you should enjoy it, is not guaranteed by the art. Therefore you would need a super art called divination, which of course is not admitted by Aristotle, but that only throws light on this problem. Aristotle will now make in the immediate sequel a more detailed distinction regarding what I now call the art which we need here, because the whole context here is the question of how to get the right kind of citizens once the city is established, i.e., the right kind of education. Let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
There are three means by which individuals become good and virtuous. These three means are the natural endowment we have at birth; the habits we form; and the rational principle within us. (1332a39-40)

LS: More literally: nature, habit, reason.

Mr. Reinken:
In the matter of endowment we must start by being men—and not some other species of animal— (1332a41-42)

LS: This is clear: that's an absolute precondition. But here we cannot speak of accident or chance [16]because virtue as such is the perfection of man. There is an essential relation of virtue itself to the nature of man. Mr. Caleen?

Mr. Caleen: I wonder if chance—[xii]

LS: —they happen to: I happen to pass, and then I saw this hold up. I happen to pass. The policemen on the beat is not supposed to happen to pass, but [to] be around. Ya? So you happen to sneeze, and therefore[17] certain kinds of happenings—there is no connection whatever, like sneezing and discussing something—lead therefore to the view that there is a necessary connection, and sneezing[18] is either a good or bad omen. Or for that matter, a cat [19]happens to cross the street—happens—and then some people say there is a necessary connection that bodes ill. Now what Aristotle has of course in mind is not such [a] superstititious interpretation, but take chance as chance: the sneezing is truly irrelevant when they deliberate, but that you find a treasure cannot be irrelevant to you.

Mr. Caleen: It seems to be also that he does not take purpose out of chance . . . one sense of chance, purpose or design is connected . . .

LS: Ya, but in which way?

Mr. Caleen: When he speaks in chapter one . . . the external goods come by chance, he does not mean that he always finds the treasure, he plans . . . but they are accidents . . . essential thing.

[xii] The tape was changed at this point, or there was a break in the tape.

LS: Yes. No, the close analysis given in the second book of the *Physics* is this: that we speak of chance especially in cases where things happen which we *could* have intended. We could have intended to dig for, to find, a treasure. To that extent the relation to end or purpose is implied, but not beyond. I mean, the religious interpretation is in terms of providence, for which the chance is a part of a divine teleological order, but that is not a part of Aristotle's analysis, where of course the chance is simply the unexpected and strange and in the individual case, unaccountable. Unaccountable. As I said before, the account you give by telling the prehistory of that treasure does not do away with the unaccountability of the crossing of the two lines. Yes, we must be first born as human beings, sure, but that is not sufficient.

Mr. Reinken:
and men too who have certain qualities both of body and soul. (1332a42-b1)

LS: So in other words, that belongs to that: that is what nature must supply if someone, well, to take an extreme case, is a moronic human being, nothing can be done about it. Yes? That is given, over which a legislator has no control.

Mr. Reinken:
There are, indeed, some qualities which it is no help to have had at the start. Habits cause them to change: implanted by nature in a neutral form, they can be modified by the force of habit either for better or worse. Animate beings other than men live mostly by natural impulse, though some are also guided to a slight extent by habit. Man lives by reason[xiii] too, and he is unique in having this gift. It follows that all the three powers of man must be tuned to agree. Men are often led by that principle [reason—Mr. R.] not to follow habit and natural impulse, once they have been persuaded that some other course is better. (1332b1-8)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Is this distinction clear, between nature, habit, and reason? In the last case, we do not have something by nature nor by habit, and yet reason tells us we ought to have it and we might do it. Is this intelligible?

Student: Can't we then speak of—

LS: Pardon?

Student: Can't we then then speak of the essential nature of man and some form . . .

LS: Yes, sure. Essentially, ya, but here we are concerned not only with the essential nature of man but also with the nature of individuals, of course. But even then, let us assume that man is by nature right-handed, as Aristotle thought. Right-handed. And then that can be reinforced by habit, of course; and yet at a certain moment a man, for example, loses his right arm, and then his reason tells him if he does not want to be completely useless and helpless, his reason tells him that he must train his left arm, and he does. A simple case. Or another case: someone is born with very poor eyesight and

[xiii] In Barker: "rational principle"

reason tells him he ought to undergo a certain operation to get better eyesight, and he does it. So [20]these are the three elements from which every understanding of education must start: the natural endowment, as one can say, natural gifts: what someone has acquired by habituation, because habituation is something like a second nature. It is not nature, but it can take on the force of nature and can be as difficult to change as nature. And the third is conviction, we can say, or persuasion, which also influences us to some extent. Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Is there a distinction between the natural and the reasonable? . . . nature implied in this particular . . .

LS: No, no, no. Nature is the natural gifts. Ya, but where does nature come in in the case of reason?

Mr. Faulkner: You mean the faculties?

LS: Yes, we have the faculty, but beyond that?

Mr. Faulkner: Reason's standard.

LS: Sure. Ya. In other words, reason is not *unlimited*. There are limitations, there are standards in the light of which reason is able to discern the preferable from the less preferable and so on. Yes. Let us read a few more lines beyond that.

Mr. Reinken:
We have already determined, in an earlier chapter— (1332b8)

LS: No, no.

Mr. Reinken:
We have already determined, in an earlier chapter, the character—

LS: Aristotle doesn't speak of course of chapters, because he didn't divide the book into chapters. But all right. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
the character of the natural endowment which is needed for our citizens, if they are to be easily moulded by the art of the legislator. When they have that endowment, the rest is entirely a matter of the education which he provides; and they will partly learn it from a training in habits, partly from a system of instruction. (1332b8-11)

LS: In other words, the nature is a condition of education. Not all men are educable, that's the implication. But education itself consists of two elements: habituation and listening. Listening, that corresponds to reason: Listen to reason, listen to speeches. But which were these conditions? Do you remember that of the nature, what is a desirable nature? Do you remember that? Miss Fromm?

Ms. Fromm: It was combination of notion of spirit and intelligence . . .

LS: Yes.

Ms. Fromm: . . .

LS: Yes. But spirited—spirited, not sluggish—and intelligent. These are the conditions, yes. They cannot be supplied by education, although[21] education can do something to improve them, but they must be presupposed indeed. Now perhaps when we have time later, we may turn to this passage about the nature. Now in the sequel—we cannot read everything—in the sequel Aristotle makes it clear that this regime which he desires will be one of equality amongst the citizens. In other words, it is a republic but an aristocratic republic. This we do not have to go [into]. Let us first turn to what he says about the principles of education in 1334b, shortly after the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
Using the distinction already made earlier— (1334b8)

LS: One second, what did I say?

Mr. Reinken: 1334b, shortly after the beginning.

LS: Yes, yes. Very well. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
Using, or regarding external goods—

LS: We have already explained earlier that one needs nature, and habit, and reason.

Mr. Reinken:
we may say the means required for achieving general excellence are nature, habit, and reason.[xiv] So far as the first of these is concerned, we have already determined the character of the endowment with which our citzens should start. It remains to consider the other two means, and to determine whether training in habit or training in rational principle ought to come first. The two modes of training must be adjusted to one another as harmoniously as possible; otherwise rational principle may fail to attain the highest ideal, and the training given through habit may show a similar defect. With a view to this result, we may— (1334b8-13)

LS: Now is this clear? In other words, habituation and reason are two different principles of education, and what is important is to have a harmony between both good habits and good speeches, otherwise there will be disharmony. There will be disharmony between the habits and the convictions. That is—yes. Now?

[xiv] In Barker: "natural endowment, habit, and rational principle"

Mr. Reinken:
With a view to this result, we may assume two things as evident. First, in the sphere of man's life (as in all life generally), birth has a first beginning, but the end attained from such a beginning is only a step to some further end. The exercise of reason[xv] and thought is the ultimate end of man's nature. It is therefore with a view to the exercise of these faculties that we should regulate, from the first, the birth and the training in habits of our citizens. Secondly, as soul and body are two, so there are also two parts of the soul, the irrational and the rational; and there are also two corresponding states of these parts—the state of appetite, and the state of pure thought. In order of time and in date of birth, the body is prior to the soul, and the irrational part of the soul is prior to the rational. This is proved by the fact that all the signs of appetite—such as anger, self-will, and desire—are visible in children from their very birth; while reasoning and thought are faculties which only appear, as a rule, when they grow older. The conclusion which follows is obvious. Children's bodies should be given attention before their souls; and their appetites should be the next part of them to be regulated. But the regulation of their appetites should be intended for the benefit of their minds—just as the attention given to their bodies should be intended for the benefit of their souls. (1334b14-28)

LS: The habituation refers to the mere appetite, a regulation of desire and aversion, which is of course always accompanied by speeches: Do that, do not do that, and so on and so on. But the understanding of why this is good and that is bad, that is not possible in that early stage, and therefore the reasoning, the understanding, comes later. Is this clear, this point? But what comes earlier is in all these cases the inferior, and therefore the regulation, the good condition of the body is meaningful only as a means for the good condition of the soul. And secondly, the good condition of the appetitive part of the soul, of the desires and aversions, is ultimately necessary only for the perfection of the pure mind. But in education itself, the lower is the immediate theme, the body and the appetitive part. But still, in the mind of the educator as distinguished from the being to be educated, this ultimate goal of man must be foremost. In other words—

Student: . . . insofar as external goods go, wouldn't the bare minimum of external goods be possible in order for a person to be habituated from childhood in moral virtue? Habituation is . . .

LS: Yes, but the question is this, you see . . . child they are meant to lead a strictly private life on the highest level, the theoretical life, that would be true. But if he is to lead a political life, if he is to be a statesman, that is not sufficient according to Aristotle. I gave this example, you know, that the family traditions are very important for the political horizon. If someone only knows his parents, and perhaps his grandparents, and the family tradition stops fifty years ago or so at the most, that is something different from where the family tradition is, let me say, coeval, the family tradition is coeval with the whole history of the *polis*. But this requires, as you can easily figure out, some fortune. Think of very simple things: the preservation of letters, of pictures and what have you is not possible for people who have only the bare means of existence. To say nothing of other things, of social graces, which are politically eminently necessary, as you could have seen

[xv] In Barker: "rational principle"

when you listen to perhaps Mr. Khrushchev. That is not possible without some family background, as they can say. Now "the family background," that means, in plain English, some property. We always come back to the same point. We may say that Aristotle is wrong there, that's a long question, but that is essential to Aristotle: the good life presupposes equipment, and therefore at least the practically or politically active men, i.e., the men who are—. One reason, by the way, of the difficulty exists, that when we speak of morality we mean sometimes something very restrictive, some simple honesty, of course of which indeed most men are capable, perhaps all men are capable. But that is of course not what Aristotle means. That is only a small part of what he understands by human excellence. Think only of the difference; for example, justice: what opportunities people like you and I, for example, have for being just or unjust are extremely limited. If we were judges, or if we were in charge of great public responsibilities, then the degree of justice, the rank of justice which would be our affair would be infinitely greater. And without opportunity of actions, the possibilities of faculties do not develop. You see, the ancients knew that, Plato and Aristotle, and so on. And for example, [22]in Plato's *Laws*, there is a remark about one virtue, what we call honesty, simple decency . . . called by Plato *sophrosune*, which we may translate by "moderation" or "temperance." Of course that is a very common thing, most people have that. But that's also very uninteresting. If a man is in this sense honest, that is in no way a qualification for political office, obviously.

Aristotle turns then to the question of the age of the parents, beginning with the body. And he figures that out very nicely, that the father should be thirty-five, thereabouts, and the mother eighteen; and he goes into quite some details so that the end of this human activity should coincide on both sides and not to create problems for one or two of the people if they get old at different stages of their married life. More important for our purpose of general understanding of Aristotle is a passage in 1335b19. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The question arises whether children should always be reared or may sometimes be exposed to die. There should certainly be a law to prevent the rearing of deformed children. On the other hand, there should also be a law, in all states where the system of social habits is opposed to unrestricted increase, to prevent the exposure of children to death *merely* in order to keep the population down. The proper thing to do is to limit the size of each family, and if children are then conceived in excess of the limit so fixed, to have miscarriage induced before sense and life have begun in the embryo. (Whether it is right or wrong to induce a miscarriage will thus depend on whether sense and life are still to come, or have already begun.) (1335b19-26)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. In other words, the line is drawn: Is it a living being? Is it already a living being or not yet? If it is already a living being, and of course a potential *human* being, then it would be murder to destroy it. That's the point. But before that, there is no problem for Aristotle. But as regards the exposure of deformed infants, he doesn't say what he means by that, but perhaps surely if one can see immediately that they are moronic or something of this kind, Aristotle has no objection to that. It is very characteristic, of course, of Aristotle.

Now in the sequel then Aristotle discusses the sexual morality, which is one can say neither particularly strict nor particularly severe. You can read that for yourself. More practically discussed is a passage a bit later in 1336b, shortly after the beginning, the question which is—

Mr. Reinken: . . .

LS: Ya, in this neighborhood.

Mr. Reinken:
It should therefore be a primary duty of the legislator to exorcise the use of bad language everywhere in our state. To use bad language of any sort lightly is next door to acting badly. The young, especially, should be kept free from hearing, or using, any such language. Those who are guilty, in spite of all prohibitions, or talking or acting indecently must be punished accordingly. The younger freemen, who are not yet allowed to recline at the common tables, should be subjected to corporal punishment and other indignities; and men of an older age should pay the penalty for behaving like slaves by undergoing indignities of a degrading character.

If the use of indecent language is thus to be proscribed, it is obvious that we must also prevent the exhibition of indecent pictures and the performance of indecent plays. It should therefore be the duty of the government to prohibit all statuary and painting which portrays any sort of indecent action. An exception may, however, be made for the festivals of deities where even the use of scurrility is licensed by the law. (But here, we may note, the law also allows men who have reached a proper maturity to acquit their wives and children from attendance by attending in person themselves.) The seeing of mimes or comedies should be forbidden to young persons by the legislator, until they have reached the age when they are allowed to share with the older men in the right of reclining and taking wine at the common tables. By that time their education will have made them all immune from the evil effects of such performances. (1336b4-23)

LS: Ya, I thought you should be aware of that, whenever the question of censorship comes up, because that is of some—you see it follows necessarily: if the function of civil society is to produce virtue, censorship is inevitable. Is inevitable. And therefore the horror of censorship which we have is a sign of the fact that we do not believe that the purpose of civil society is to produce virtue. That follows necessarily. Yes?

Student: I have a question to ask . . . question about women and children, is there also a different assumption about the nature of human beings which can . . .

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Can Aristotle's assumptions about deformed children be the same as modern thought on issues like this?

LS: Ya, we modern . . . now this surely goes back to the . . . Then difficulties arise in another way; for example . . . comes up, and if people are in a way incapable of it, and must there not be a way for legally ending their
sufferings . . . assumptions . . . understand the common view, what I think is . . . out of the religious . . . that the danger . . . by unscrupulous physician and unscrupulous . . . is so great that the . . . much smaller . . . That is always the . . . in Aristotle.[xvi] And this example throws light again on the question we discussed on a former occasion: Aristotle and natural law. Strictly speaking there is no natural law, there is natural right. But the content of that natural right differs conspicuously from what we on the basis of the biblical tradition regard as right. There's no question about that. Also, if you would read the section on sexual morality, you would see that they are also considered differently. It is by no means lax, but it is not as strict as it would be on the basis of the biblical tradition.

Now there were a few more passages which we should consider. Yes, now this argument in the first part, I saw this from the papers . . . is difficult and I will therefore repeat it, although I mentioned it last time. What Aristotle does at the beginning of the seventh book is to establish as it were this proportion: the theoretical life [LS writes on the blackboard] to the practical political life of the individual corresponds somehow to imperialism[23] . . . the self-sufficient city to the realistic or expansionist city, remember? There are many difficulties here; one I have not discussed last time, which I think I should mention. There is obviously something awkward about this proportion: Why should imperialism be the political equivalent to what in the individual is the practical political life? And I tried to explain that last time by referring to the element of self-assertion, which is essential according to Aristotle in a moral virtue . . . generally. There is also the other scheme . . . concern with the other side: what has self-sufficiency to do with the theoretical life? Self-sufficiency of the *polis*, that it is not expansionist and simply tries to preserve its integrity, what has this to do with the philosophical life? Well, because the highest form of self-sufficiency according to Aristotle for the individual consists in the theoretical life; therefore also the lesser needs of the theoretical man than the needs of the general. But there is also one other implication which is important to consider, and that is trivial: the *polis* as *polis* cannot lead a theoretical life. I mean, the *polis* cannot theorize, that can only be done by individuals. Now to explain that, let us turn to an earlier passage, 1328b, near the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
It remains for us now to enumerate *all* the elements necessary for the existence of the state. Our list of these elements will include what we have called the "parts" of the state as well as what we have termed its "conditions." To make such a list we must first determine how many services a state performs; and then we shall easily see how many elements it must contain. The first thing to be provided is food. The next is arts and crafts; for life is a business which needs many tools. The third is arms: the members of a state must bear arms in person, partly in order to maintain authority and repress disobedience, and partly in order to meet any threat of external aggression. The fourth thing which has to be provided is a certain supply of property, alike for domestic use and

[xvi] Strauss is some distance from the tape recorder and very difficult to undertand.

for military purposes. The fifth and first[xvii] is an establishment for the service of the gods, or, as it is called, public worship. The sixth thing, and the most vitally necessary, is a method of deciding what is demanded by the public interest and what is just in men's private dealings. (1328b2-15)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. The last is government, is only a somewhat more detailed description of what government is, because the decision about what is advantageous and publicly advantageous and just is obviously government. And executive offices are simply subordinate to that. He speaks here explicitly of the deliberative part of the government, but that is according to him the core of the government. Now the passage which I have in mind is one to which we have referred before, about the priesthood. That is the fifth and first: fifth in the order of the enumeration; first—well, Barker says in rank; that is true to that extent, that from the point of view of religion of course the gods are higher than men. To that extent, it is the highest. Now this is of very great importance for the understanding of Aristotle with a view to this question: theoretical life and the *polis*. All these are, in the wider sense of the words, parts of the *polis*. What was the highest part of the *polis* in Plato's *Republic*, may I ask?

Student: The philosophers.

LS: The philosophers. The philosophers. [24]There are three enumerations of the parts of the *polis* in the *Politics*. In none of them are the philosophers mentioned. I made a further step. Aristotle does not say here what the function of the priest is, except in a very general way: concern about the divine, with the divine. He doesn't say more about that. And maybe even a follower of Aristotle, who followed him rather strictly in all these matters, Marsilius of Padua [LS writes on the blackboard], fourteenth century,[xviii] gives this indication, this kind of commentary on this passage, saying the priests are teachers, which Aristotle never says here, and which is partly due to the biblical tradition, to certain passages in the Bible. The priests are teachers. Now if we consider this non-Aristotelian remark—I mean Marsilius, of course, not Aristotle, but he understood him—[25]we are entitled to say that the only teachers who are as such, as teachers . . . the *polis* are the priests, not the philosophers. That is very, very important to observe. Now what can this mean? What can this mean? You will see from a passage which I shall read to you very soon that this has an Aristotelian basis, this interpretation. What do the priests teach? Well, in the first place, the ritual, of course: how to sacrifice, to which god, at what time, and this kind of thing. And which crimes are sacrilegious and which are not, and all this kind of thing.

Now there is a passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book 12, which is very well known and was especially well known in the Middle Ages: 1074b, near the beginning. I just read it to you in the translation:

Our forefathers in the most remote ages have handed down to their posterity a tradition in the form of a myth, that these bodies [the heavenly bodies—LS] are gods, and that the

[xvii] In Barker: "The fifth (but in order of merit, the first)"
[xviii] Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275-c. 1342), author of *Defensor pacis* (1324).

divine encloses the whole. The rest of that tradition [I mean, apart from that teaching about the cosmic gods, as you could say—LS] has been added later in mythical form with a view to the persuasion of the multitude and to its legal and utilitarian expediency. [Well, I am sure Aristotle says about what is useful in regard to law—LS] They say these gods are in the form of men, or like some of the other animals, and they say other things consequent on and similar to these, which we have mentioned.[xix]

Here you are. There the divine, as Aristotle knew about it, was an understanding of the highest principle of the universe and there[26]—of heaven, heaven being the vault surrounding the whole, and therefore somehow the seat of the divine and especially the heavenly bodies. That was, you could say, a kind of natural religion, because[27] [those] were views which were also shared by many non-Greeks. Somewhere in Aristophanes we read a passage where he calls these gods "some morning star," the gods also worshiped by the barbarians, not the Greek gods, Olympian gods in particular. But still this is in Aristotle's opinion a sound view: the heavenly bodies are living beings, living beings, because nothing of attraction and repulsion being accepted by Aristotle, they move under their own power, they are self moving. But then certain other stories were added with a view to men's accepting the laws, notions of divine punishment inflicted on those who disobey the most important laws, especially those which are so difficult to reinforce: hospitality, the unprotected stranger, the unprotected orphan and widows, this kind of thing especially, but murder, of course. So this is what the function of the priests is, and the *polis* requires that. To repeat: philosophy as philosophy is beyond the *polis*; it is the preserve of some individuals. The political reflection of the philosophers are the priests. And that leads us up to another point I have mentioned on a former occasion: the *polis* as Aristotle understood it cannot be secular, if you understand by secular that it does not have a religious establishment, as [in] civil society it must have it. And that view is not peculiar to Aristotle; I do not know of a single Greek thinker who denied that. That is a notion which has come up only in modern times, partly as a consequence of the wars of religion.

There is one more point—is Mr. Brown still here? I believe I see—no, then, there's no reason to take it up. Now is there any point you would like to take up? There are many things here. By the way, as regards the political use of religion, you have a good example here in 1335b12, when he speaks of pregnant women. Do you have that? Read that.

Mr. Reinken:
Pregnant mothers should pay attention to their bodies: they should take regular exercise, and follow a nourishing diet. The legislator can easily lead them to a habit of regular exercise if he requires them to make some daily pilgrimage for the purpose of worshipping at the shrines of the goddesses who preside over childbirth. (1335b13-17)

LS: You see, that is simply—the belief that there are goddesses who protect women in childbirth is given, and the legislator, the rational legislator whom Aristotle advises, uses

[xix] Taken with minor modifications from the translation by W. D. Ross of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 1074b1-14.

this belief for a rational purpose: to give the necessary exercise to the pregnant woman. That is a little illustration of the principle. You wanted to say something?

Student: This is conspicuously close to the image of the flute player. It seems to me that the excellence of the flute player . . . it follows from flute playing . . . whereas it would seem that Aristotle . . . assumes the excellence of man also follows from the—

LS: Oh, he doesn't follow, the excellence of the flute player, the flute player doesn't follow from this . . .

Same Student: No, no, I don't mean he doesn't follow—

LS: Then we would all become excellent flute players immediately if we had . . .

Same Student: No, I mean, in the idea of flute playing, the nature of flute playing supplies a certain conception of excellence; you know what flute playing is, you know . . . in a similar way you could say that if you know what man is . . .

LS: Sure, sure, but . . .

Same Student: No, no, the point I want to make is that it seems that the excellence of man follows from a conception of what is the nature of man, and it would seem that a remark that you made earlier about Aristotle . . . that's separate . . . the question is whether there is a human nature . . . all kinds of problems raised by modern . . . evolution.

LS: Well, after all, whatever the genesis of man might be, once he has emerged, he was man. At a certain moment, men cease to be something in between apes and man . . . And that is . . . irrelevant, to say . . . [xx] For example, take a horse and a bird . . . Now for example, you cannot possibly say that a horse is defective this moment because it doesn't fly, or that a bird is defective because it . . . Each being has a specific nature, and hence its perfection or deficiency is determined by its nature. For example, a bird which can't fly, can't fly, there is something wrong with that bird *because* it is a bird. But in the case of a horse, there is nothing wrong with it if it can't fly. It would be wrong if it can't run. A horse runs. And now in the case of men . . . specific work of man, activity . . . the specific activity of man . . . the specific activity of the bird is to fly. There are other activities, for example, eating, but . . . therefore they are not characteristic . . . Now what is the characteristic work of man? That is the question. Aristotle says everyone knows that . . . other animals: dumb. Man is the animal which talks. And even if some human beings do not talk because they are mute, we know they are defective to that extent; there is something missing which belongs to man.

Now then of course we have to go into the question: What does it mean to be a good, good as a talking animal, does it mean to be able to talk at great speed . . . so that is a certain use of talk . . . and then you develop that, Aristotle contends, and then you

[xx] Strauss is inaudible here for some minutes. He is standing some distance from the tape recorder and difficult to understand.

discover, rediscover theoretically what we know from habit . . . the so-called virtue. The virtue . . . kinds of virtues are forms, goodness of an animal who . . . speech. And the question of the origin of the human race [28]does not immediately affect that, only a certain interpretation, namely, a certain interpretation of evolution according to which all changes are merely quantitative changes. However, that is an arbitrary and dogmatic assertion. If the changes of more and less, say of . . . proportion . . . or whatever else you take, if these changes at the certain time issue in qualitative differences, then it does not make much sense to stick to the quantitative difference as *the* illuminating difference. That's all. This—I think, this does not create a difficulty.

The difficulty in Aristotle . . . is rather this: that he never attempted to give an account of the human virtues deductively, if I may say so. Do you know what I mean by that? Starting from the fact that man is the speaking animal, or the rational animal, to show now how, given the various subdivisions of rationality as well as the necessary subdivisions of human pursuits, the fundamental pursuits, how these and these virtues, and *only* these and these virtues can exist. To some extent you find such a deduction in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa*,[xxi] but Aristotle himself never gives that. And Thomas could not do it except with the help of certain Platonic speculations. You know, Plato did give a deduction in the *Republic*, when he distinguishes the three parts of the soul: there is the virtue of desire, temperance; a virtue of spiritedness called courage; and then virtues which have to do with the whole, moderation—I made a mistake, did I not?

Student: Moderation is a quality.

LS: [29]Virtue of the reason—the rational part itself, wisdom. And then, the chief point, the proper relation of the three: justice. I made a slight mistake, namely, moderation or temperance is not called by Plato in the *Republic* the virtue of [30]the desiring part. That I think is not a difficulty. It would be much more interesting to see why it appears to us a difficulty. I do not believe that the ultimate reason for that is the doctrine of evolution, because long before Darwin, or for that matter Lamarck[xxii] appeared, a new moral teaching was developed in the seventeenth century and afterward which was wholly at variance with Aristotelian teaching. The theory of evolution came much too late to effect this change.

Is there any other point? So next time, let us see whether we will be betrayed next time again. To prevent that, within the limits of the possible, Mr. . . . you will be present? Good.

---

[1] Deleted "that's"
[2] Deleted "the good cannot be"
[3] Deleted "with a"

[xxi] Presumably a reference to Thomas Aquinas's treastises on man, on the last end of man, and on human acts (*Summa Theologica* I, questions 75-102 and I-II, questions 1-21); perhaps also to questions on the passions as acts common to man and animals (*ST* I-II, questions 22-48).
[xxii] Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), one of the founders of the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle and well-known evolutionist.

[4] Deleted ". U"
[5] Deleted comma
[6] Deleted "the biblical"
[7] Deleted "they say"
[8] Deleted "of Aristotle's"
[9] Here and in his immediately preceding intervention, LS is translating γὰρ χαλεπόν ἐστι τοιαῦτα νοῆσαι ἀλλὰ ποιῆσαι μᾶλλον. τὸ μὲν γὰρ λέγειν εὐχῆς ἔργον ἐστί, τὸ δὲ συμβῆναι τύχης.
[10] Deleted "if we are"
[11] Deleted "there is indeed"
[12] Deleted "occurs"
[13] Deleted "LS: Yes"?
[14] Deleted "between"
[15] Deleted "is also"
[16] Deleted "because it is"
[17] Deleted "some people"
[18] Deleted "means"
[19] Deleted "crossing"
[20] Deleted "that is no"
[21] Deleted "reason"
[22] Deleted "there is"
[23] Deleted "/law—"
[24] Deleted "in no"
[25] Deleted "we have to say"
[26] Deleted "-with"
[27] Deleted "that was"
[28] Deleted "does not"
[29] Deleted "Ya, no, what is that?"
[30] Deleted "the desire part"

Session 17: no date
Education; leisure (book 7)

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —complete, the whole book is complete, you did not dispose of the difficulty created by references to subjects which he is going to handle and going to treat, and which he did not treat.[i] That is true. Now regarding the mean, what you said, that was good of you to think of book 4, the reference there, but does not Aristotle mean here also by "mean," by the term "the mean," what he meant when he spoke of the Dorian mode, namely, the mean character, meaning the moral character, not the musically mean?

Student: I was wondering if Plato had included or just might possibly had in mind musically?

LS: That could be. I . . . yes, but it was good you brought that up. These were the only points where you raised questions going beyond summarizing Aristotle's argument. There were of course other points which must have struck you as relevant. For instance?

Student: Well, I was interested in the use of analogies as customary and that which was innovative, for example, he refers to the ancestors in original . . . use included, but later when they became related . . . interested in experimenting with all forms of education . . . they include . . . as soon as they received a wider knowledge and more experience, it was excluded again. And . . . getting . . . another point, the judging of the Spartans—

LS: Now first, what is the more general lesson you would draw from this discussion of the changed judgment on the schools?

Student: The initial educational program was just set up under no particular principle, but the idea of just studying all subjects regardless . . . there was no principle as to what this proper . . . certain age group . . . did experiment with some of these then they realized . . . and some were not, and this was the wider experience. They eventually . . .

LS: Yes, but still, couldn't you state more simply and more clearly what the general theme is which makes this passage interesting? Well, anyone here who sees an overall subject which we even may have discussed here in this class already? Progress. Good. We will return to that passage later. Thank you very much, Mr. . . . There of course the question of leisure is also very interesting if you think what role it plays in present-day social problems. But we will turn to that later.

First I would like—is Mr. Bowen here? Mr. Bowen—oh, and this I will circulate, will you begin . . . There were a few points which I thought would be of interest to the class,

[i] Strauss responds to a students' papers.

and that concerns the second half of book 7. Mr. Bowen says: "Politics is no place for purely speculative discussion." Now that is in connection with what Aristotle says about the end of man, that's happiness, and no reason is given for that. Why? Why does Aristotle refrain from speculation? "Tentatively, we may suggest that the *Politics* is no place for purely speculative discussion. This leads to the seemingly absurd conclusion that the end of the *polis* is not a matter for political discussion per se. This absurdity however suggests that it is a cover of the underlying tension between speculation, philosophy, and prudential wisdom, politics." What would you say to this suggestion? Why does Aristotle not give an argument establishing that happiness consists in the practice of virtue? How would you explain that, in this passage of the seventh book? Well, in the context he explicitly refers to the *Ethics*. That's the simple answer. And from Aristotle's point of view, the *Ethics* and the *Politics* are a unit. The *Politics* is the second part of a comprehensive study of which the *Ethics* is the first part. But still, Mr. Bowen is not entirely wrong. [1]How do we know in the most exact way what the end of man is? Is this knowledge supplied by the *Ethics*? That is a question which is not explicitly discussed by Aristotle, but it was discussed in the Middle Ages, very clearly. Well, the question of the end of man is in itself a theoretical question and therefore belongs to the theoretical sciences, to what they understood in the Middle Ages, Aristotelians, [as] natural science. Natural science. It is indeed true that the *Ethics* and *Politics* do not go into these matters theoretically. What Aristotle does when he discusses happiness at the beginning of the *Ethics* especially, is that he takes common opinions, and by scrutiny of these common opinions he arrives at a certain view as to what constitutes happiness. But the full account and the clear account would be a theoretical account.

Now then he has a difficulty, which I suppose has been felt by some of you or the others: "The individual's endowments, spirit and intelligence, is a result of chance. This being the case, the actualization of the ideal good and happy *polis* is truly a chancy business." Ya, to what extent is this true? Surely, Aristotle says so; in a certain passage, he says so. But what does he mean? Is this the last word on the subject, that the actualization of the best regime is simply matter of chance? Now let me explain that. One of the crucial conditions of the best *polis* is that you have the right kind of a citizen body, people combining spiritedness and intelligence. Now [2]is this condition merely a matter of chance—the fulfillment of this condition merely a matter of chance? When Aristotle starts a discussion, that is generally his procedure, he uses expressions which are at first glance correct. The political art, the art of the legislator, is an art in a way like any other art; and in every art we distinguish the activity of the artisan or artist as such from that which his art presupposes. The shoemaker must have leather or wood, or whatever it may be; this is not a matter of his art, it is given to him. His art is applied to this material.

Now from this point of view, the simple distinction is: What does the art do, and what is the thing for which the art is not responsible? That which is outside of the art is then called simply chance. It does not depend on the peculiar kind of rationality which is that art. But that is of course not quite sufficient, because that there are such things as leather and wood around somehow, although to different degrees, is not a matter of chance. Now let us look at the human beings here. What about the intelligent and spirited beings which he wants as citizens? Is the existence of such human beings a matter of chance? Where do

we find them especially, this beautiful mixture of spiritedness and intelligence, according to Aristotle? Pardon?

Student: . . .

LS: Ya, but more generally, and more precisely: in the temperate zone. Temperate zone. So you have nature here. It is not chance. It is as little chance—for example, no one would say, "I saw a dog who chanced to have four legs." That's not chance; the dog has four legs. That he barked at this particular moment, that may be chance, surely. But that he has four legs or a stomach, you wouldn't say that this is an accident, it's chance. So that there are spirited—that this combination occurs rather frequently in the temperate zone is natural. And therefore we have to introduce a final distinction between nature and chance as distinguished from art and so on. But still, regarding the best regime, that is much more chancy than that you would find this combination in the temperate zone. And that, of course, as Plato puts it in the fourth book of the *Laws*, one can say that chance is the legislator. There was very little advance planning in the world because, you can say because there was no fully real political science, political philosophy in the world. And since the influence of political philosophy from Plato and Aristotle's point of view is very limited; one can say on the whole the world is governed by chance, they would say. And yet that does not make superfluous the rational consideration, but it also induces [us] to be not too sanguine about its possible influence.

Now do you have any other point, because I felt all the time that this chance problem is one of the major obstacles we have to overcome if we want to understand Aristotle. You see, we are what—almost everything that we call today historical, with any emphasis, is what is called by Plato and Aristotle chance. That is the difficulty. You know, [3]history, historical changes. We somehow imply that these are all either meaningful changes in the sense of a historical process of a progressive character, or if not, that they are surely necessary, necessary in a nonteleological sense: it had to happen; given these conditions, it had to happen, and therefore [4]we cannot speak of chance. That was not the view, because [5]if we go back to the simple example of chance, digging potatoes and finding a treasure, that also had to happen given these conditions, because the treasure was there: this man was compelled by his hunger and foresight to dig potatoes, and just as the older man was compelled to bury his treasure through fear of enemies who would take away his treasure; so, and that doesn't do away with the chance character. You have the . . . yes?

Student: Does this relate to Machiavelli's *fortuna*?

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: This comes at a dividing point, a conditioned point between the ancients and us?

LS: Ya, but what is the difference between Machiavelli on the one hand, and the ancients on the other?

Same Student: Well, he says that *fortuna* is that which is out of our control, that which is out of our control.

LS: Who said that?

Same Student: I understood Machiavelli.

LS: No, to that extent he would merely repeat what—I mean, that *fortuna* is elusive, that is implied in the old understanding. You can't catch her. Machiavelli would say—characteristic of Machiavelli is not that he says *fortuna* is elusive, which he also does, but that he says you can catch her, she's a woman who can be conquered, that is elusive, that is elusive. Machiavelli teaches—at least explicitly, you know that needs some qualification—that *fortuna* is a woman who can be forced by the right kind of man. The ancients might have said she is a woman, but she cannot be forced. That is the difference.

Now I can't go into all these things. He says also the educational system will be different for the young ruled than it will be for the old rulers, but old men do not normally go to school. And on its face, the suggestion that old men must be educated is ridiculous. Do you recognize here anything that Aristotle says? Of course not. I mean, this difficulty is merely one which Mr. Bowen has found without his being there. Well, I think I will leave it at these points, especially since he is not here and doesn't have the benefit, if any, of these critical remarks. Now let us turn to our text because it is our last meeting, and one should try to give this class a proper conclusion at the end. Let us read the beginning of book 8.

Mr. Reinken:
All would agree that the legislator should make the education of the young his chief and foremost concern. (1337a11-13)

LS: You see, here you see the massive difference between the modern political notion and the classic political notion: education is the most important theme for the legislator. What does Hobbes say about the most important theme of the founder of a city?

Student: Protection.

LS: Protection. What does John Locke say?

Same Student: Security and property.

LS: You see. We could give many other examples. Education is the most important theme. Rousseau to some extent restates it, but then Rousseau's claim was that he is the man who restored classical thought against the moderns. But in Rousseau it means something rather different, nevertheless. Yes, go on, please.

Mr. Reinken:

In the first place, the constitution of a state will suffer if education is neglected. The citizens of the state should always be educated to suit the constitution of their state. (1337a13-15)

LS: Peculiar constitution, peculiar regime. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The type of character appropriate to a constitution is the power which continues to sustain it, as it is also the force which originally creates it. The democratic type of character creates and sustains democracy; the oligarchical type creates and sustains oligarchy; and as the progression ascends each higher type of character will always tend to produce a higher form of constitution. (1337a15-19)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now you see, the most important thing is education of the young towards the regime; and therefore democratic education differs from oligarchic education, monarchic education, and so on and so on. But this does not lead to any relativism for Aristotle because there is a hierarchy of regimes. Is this clear? You have some doubts, is this clear? I mean, I am not now concerned with whether Aristotle is right, but only the difference, is this clear? There are *n* different regimes and the education must be relevant to the regime. But this does not lead to "quote relativism unquote" in Aristotle, because there is an order of rank in the different regimes. Ya? So I misunderstood the expression on your face. Now Aristotle has said a lot about this education towards the regime before, as you remember, and we compared that with the present-day discussion of, how is it called? Political socialization, is that the term? Good. Now what is the difference between what Aristotle means by education and political socialization? I believe we haven't made that clear. The simple and basic difference. What is the difference? Barker doesn't speak of political education. Why do they call it socialization?

Student: Does the term "education" imply more of a rational content?

LS: Yes, exactly, but try to give us all an opportunity to see what you divine.

Same Student: Well, the idea in education, it would seem, is that you can establish with certain values—well, certain values can be established on the basis of reason, where in socialization, you just try to form change of habits, or—

LS: Forming of habits is decisive for Aristotle, [yet] that's not the difference. But education is a conscious thing on the part of the educator. He looks at the goal, he looks at the matter, the material, the human beings; and then he molds the material in accordance with that end. But political socialization may very well mean a process which goes on without anybody except the political scientist being aware of it. So that's the difference. Aristotle would say this: that generally speaking, an unconscious process is inferior to conscious processes. Generally speaking. Why? Why is an "unconscious education" (in quotation marks) inferior to conscious education?

Student: . . .

LS: In the case of an unconscious process, you literally do not know what you are doing; and therefore you have no possibility of knowing whether you do well or not. Sure. Now in the sequel, Aristotle speaks—goes on with this notion, we cannot read everything. And he speaks of a pro-education. Yes?

Student: The distinction you're drawing seems to imply that, the implication being political socialization denies the value of conscious education, I think you're not—

LS: No, no it's indifferent. Indifferently. Whereas the term education puts the emphasis on that. You see, the trouble with much of present-day social science is that it admits everything. And therefore, the answer . . . Oh yes, we know that. The question is *how* it is known and how clearly it is known, that's always a question. When Aristotle speaks of education, he means a conscious and consciously-conducted process. This is not meant when you speak of political socialization. It may be implied in it or admitted by it, but it is not meant by it. That is all I said.

Student: He . . . one is better, which is really more important, Aristotle says that in reality the conscious education is better, but is it in fact more important?

LS: What does that mean? What does it mean, "more important?"

Same Student: In reality which type of education, the conscious or the unconscious—

LS: In other words, this happens most of the time in unconscious ways. This political socialization happens most of the time in an unconscious, in an unplanned way. Ya, sure, that might be so, but [6]do we not make such studies of political socialization, for example, in order to see what is wrong or what might be wrong with it, and in order to prove that point, is it not then from this point of view more informed, although it occurs more rarely? You see, in other words, what entitles you to say that that which is most frequent is the most important in such matters? That's the question. As long as you do not completely divorce the study of political phenomena from the question of improvement, you cannot say that the most frequent is the most important. Yes?

Student: I think—would you say that part of the reason that it's unconscious today is because of the state–society distinction which clearly goes on in the social spirit?

LS: Yes sure, surely . . . that is a long story, and which visibly begins with Edmund Burke, the assertion that a constitution which has come into being by growth . . . by unconscious processes, is absolutely superior to a made constitution, to a made constitution.[ii] Ya? Surely that is behind it, but that is now almost forgotten, but that is the beginning.

[ii] For Strauss on Burke's emphasis on a constitution as the result of a natural process, see *Natural Right and History,* 313-14; consider also Sir James Mackintosh's *Discourse on the Law of Nature*

Student: I think that part of the argument between Aristotle and people—the invisible hand position . . . [iii]

LS: Sure, there is a close connection with that. Just as the invisible hand doctrine says [that] you contribute best to the common good if you never think of the common good. Sure, you work best toward the best regime by never thinking of it, and only do that in a fit of absent-mindedness. Sure. Yes?

Student: Is that point that Aristotle's making that political education is superior to political socialization because it works better and is more efficient, or is it because the conscious activities are more peculiarly human than—

LS: No, because they are more likely—they do not preclude the possibility of producing the good. That I think one could say, because you cannot produce the good, that is Aristotle's implication, without knowing it, at least not in human matters. You can produce a perfect puppy without any conscious planning, as is clear, perhaps also perfect babies, as babies in the state in which they are born, but you cannot bring up a child if you do not know what you want to do to him or her. I think it's presupposed. Now if that is called rationalism, it is a somewhat complicated word, then surely Aristotle was a rationalist, if that is meant. But some people think that around 1900 or so, the first decade of this century, there was a man called Sigmund Freud who made this amazing discovery that men are mostly irrational, and therefore—I mean, I give a crude version of a crude view [laughter]—and this condemns to insignificance all earlier political thought which was based on the principle that reason is most important. There is a little element of truth. Only one thing is, of course, wrong: you would think that these people would know how unreasonable most of us are most of the time. That was always known, and I think you have found plenty of evidence for this view in Aristotle's *Politics*. Always the question is men *must* be irrational—that indeed was not held by Aristotle for example.

Now to follow first this argument: if education is necessary, that cannot begin early enough, it must be preceded by a pre-education, by a preliminary education. Now that is not developed here by Aristotle; it is developed more fully by Plato in the first book of the *Laws*, by this illustration. You want to bring up someone as a house builder, and then you have surely the process of educating him in house building, i.e., when he is an apprentice. But there is a preliminary education which is helpful to that general education, that proper education, and that is if he plays at housebuilding while he is a little child. That is what Aristotle means, a pre-education. The true education to civic virtue can come only much later, but there is a pre-education which can already begin at a very early age. Should this education be public or common? And his answer is: It should be public or common, because it is an education for public activity, ultimately because the *polis* is prior to the individual and the individual belongs to the *polis*—the thought

---

and Nations (1799) *Vindiciae Gallicae and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, ed. Donald Winch (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006).

[iii] For the invisible hand doctrine, see Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1776), book 4, chapter 2.

with which he had begun the work. Now you see, take the example of education to democracy: he should grow up towards an already-existing democratic regime. In that sense, a democracy is surely prior to that baby who is to be brought up as a future democrat. That's clear. The issue is not this, the issue is: What is to be taught with a view to that guiding principle? Especially, is the education to be intellectual or moral education? Now what if the question is stated in this general way: intellectual or moral education? What is Aristotle's general answer? What would you say Mr. Agria?

Mr. Agria: Both.

LS: Still, is there not—

Mr. Agria: Well, moral.

LS: Much more, I would say. Just as in Plato, when you read for example, the . . . in Plato would be, say, book 2 and 3 of the *Republic*, you know, the education of the guardians—not yet of the wise rulers, that is a different story. That is also almost exclusively moral education. And generally speaking, when the ancients speak of education in political contexts, they mean much more moral education, the formation of character, than what we call intellectual education. Much more. Whereas in present-day usage, I think the emphasis is much more on intellectual education, acquisition of skills and so on, than on the formation of character. This education is of course, as Aristotle has it in mind, the education in an aristocracy. Now let us turn to 1337b, shortly after the beginning, "that the necessary things must be taught."

Mr. Reinken:
There can be no doubt that such useful subjects as are really necessary ought to be part of the instruction of children. But this does not mean the inclusion of every useful subject. Occupations are divided into those which are fit for freemen and those which are unfit for them; and it follows from this that the total amount of useful knowledge imparted to children should never be large enough to make them mechanically minded. (1337b4-8)

LS: And so on. In other words, the education in an aristocracy, in an *aristocracy* must be liberal education. Liberal and not *banausic* or unfree. And Aristotle illustrates this by a number of examples. The education is to be gentlemen's education, which is distinguished not only from the education of the vulgar but also from some other things. Shortly after you left off, Mr. Reinken, he says something about the education in the sciences. It is not unfree, it is not illiberal. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
Some of these branches can be studied, up to a point, without any illiberality; but too much concentration upon them, with a view to attaining perfection, is liable to cause the same evil effects that have just been mentioned. (1337b15-18)

LS: Well, what he translates "perfection" means exactness. Exactness. The gentleman is not concerned with exactness. That is an important point. Well, take a very simple

example: to be exact regarding every penny; that's one form of exact, that's illiberal from Aristotle—from the gentlemen's point of view. But where do we find exactness in ordinary life? I mean, disregarding the sciences proper. Well, in the arts to some extent. For example, a house builder, a carpenter has to be exact. What would you do with a door which is done by an inexact man? You can't be gentlemanly in such matters, he has to be exact. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: *Ergo*, no scientist is a gentleman.

LS: In a way, yes. [Laughter] Yes, Aristotle discusses that. You must try to understand that. The scientist as scientist, they may coincide in the same individual. Aristotle gives some example in his scientific writings, his so-called biological writings, what does the scientist do? He touches dirty, absolutely despicable beasts, ya, worms and all these kinds of things. And he apologizes—you see, such was the status of the worm at that time, that he still has to apologize for that—that he stoops to these low things. Surely there is a difference. But I think one thing is to laugh about it, but another thing is also to recognize the seriousness in this ridiculous matter, you see? Is it not a problem, assuming that man is by far superior to the brutes—brutes or beasts. I say this in order to avoid the word "animal"; the Greek word "animal" comprises man; it means "living." We constantly act on that premise; we could not understand one another without this assumption. Now is it not strange, then, that the higher should devote such a great attention to the lower? That's a problem. That we are accustomed to it by a tradition of more than two thousand years is not a good answer, because—you know, a merely traditional answer means, of course: Some George has the answer, but I don't have it. You know? Do you see that point? So one must really see why is this a problem. But it is possible that Aristotle meant here not so much the sciences proper, as such things as medicine. I mean, according to the then-prejudices, a general could be a physician, he could not be a carpenter or shoemaker. That's still recognizable, you know. Do you not distinguish between the professional men and those who are not professional? I believe I have heard that. And so, you see. Let us continue to see what Aristotle has to say, if that is the best example, about the medical profession. How does he say? Go on where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
A good deal depends on the purpose for which acts are done or subjects are studied. Anything done to satisfy a personal need, or to help a friend, or to attain virtue,[iv] will not be illiberal; but the very same act, when done repeatedly at the instance of other persons, may be counted menial and servile. (1337b18-22)

LS: In other words, a man who studies medicine in order to practice it for everyone, that is something slightly degrading. But if you do it in order to be of some help to your family and your friends, or out of sheer curiosity, it's a different story. But the point in which I am interested, we will see it immediately: Aristotle does not share the mere prejudices of this view, that goes without saying, but he accepts these prejudices to some [extent] politically, by which I mean not merely accommodating himself, but if it is true that the gentlemen are the best men for ruling the *polis*, then the prejudices go with the

[iv] In Barker: "goodness"

gentlemen, [and] have to be exactly for that purpose, too. You know? That is clear. If you accept the principle of [the] rule of the gentlemen, and gentlemen are constituted by certain opinions also, then you have to accept these opinions for that purpose. Aristotle himself is not under the spell of these prejudices. Now what he is driving at will appear gradually as we go. But someone raised his hand, and I had to postpone it. Yes?

Student: Yes, I thought he might have the same criterion as the art of music or a pianist, say, an accomplished pianist needs exactitude.

LS: Yes, sure, Aristotle looks at it from this way. Yes?

Same Student: But apparently this would not be a gentlemanly act.

LS: Yes, yes, he says so later on. Whenever a man is, by what he does, dependent on the opinion of incompetent people, that is deplorable by the . . . The gentleman is a man who does not depend on the opinion of non-gentlemen. That is so. That makes him a gentleman. He is dependent to some extent on the opinion of the other gentlemen, but what the non-gentlemen think about it is irrelevant. Now whenever there is something . . . Let us—I mean, that is not complete nonsense. Look around today, forget about Aristotle. Look at[7] . . . political scientists. They have to make a living. They have to make a living, and that means they are dependent: they become dependent on all kinds of departments, and presidents, and so on and so on. That is not always—I mean, I take now the case of thoughtful and well-prepared people. Do you not think that the problem of a degrading dependence can arise?

Same Student: Sure.

LS: Ah ha. What is the only way of avoiding it? Now let us be quite honest or cynical, in this case they amount to the same thing. [Laughter] How can you avoid that? What? Being . . .

Same Student: . . .

LS: Being a man of independent means, as . . . That's what he means. Now then of course you can say—then there will be some nasty people around who will say: Where did that wealth come from originally? Now I take the best case: a very old family. One doesn't even know about this. But then there come some people who make very radical reflections like Rousseau and Marx, you remember, who try to show it *could* not have had an honest origin. Surely, but these questions—but then these doctrines are truly and literally subversive, these doctrines. They are subversive, and not only of the order which we have today but perhaps of any possible social order, and therefore one can rightly say these questions are meaningless questions and shouldn't be raised. One can say that.

So let us leave it then at the simple practical view: the only way of avoiding degrading dependence is either an extremely high degree of one's own asceticism—you know, it is

obvious that if you can live on a thousand dollars a year, then you are much less dependent than if you need five thousand a year, and so on and so on. I don't have to labor that point, I believe. But assuming that very few men are willing or able to live in this extremely ascetic way, we become dependent on others, and more than once on the goodwill of people on whom we should not be dependent as self-respecting men. That is behind that. I think only a little bit [of] observation and reflection is needed to see that Aristotle may be wrong in his solution, but it is at least it is a respectable solution, one respectable solution to a problem which is coeval with man. So. I don't say that I have proof that Aristotle is right, but I only hope there is proof that he doesn't talk nonsense and this is not simply dated stuff. We can recognize our own problems in that immediately. Yes?

Student: The implicit doctrine of freedom that you see here is suspiciously like that of the extreme democrat, in one sense. In other words, a man dependent on himself, acting only in terms of what arises within himself, and it also seems to me to clash somewhat with Aristotle's great saying that man is a social animal. I mean, it seems there is obscure here what we find today is an essential fact of human existence, the extent to which people are in fact dependent upon each other.

LS: Well, [8]let us take this man of independent means, [who] is of course wholly impossible outside of society. The very simple fact that so many things which he must not do as a gentleman but which have to be done for him shows that he could not live in isolation, not to go into any deeper question. So furthermore, which is perhaps more relevant, a single gentleman in this way could not maintain his gentlemanship simply physically if there were not other gentlemen who had the same interests and who would defend him and his cause and his interests against others. So there is no difference—I mean, that men are dependent on others, that every man is dependent, even the most powerful tyrant, as you know, is dependent on other human beings for the simple reason that [9]every man is killable by any other man. You know that? Hobbes's great insight. That is trivial, and of course Aristotle knew it. Now you, I think you are guilty of an unfair demand. When we speak of an independent man, we use a crude practical expression: we mean that kind of independence which is possible, which is possible, and that [10]includes many dependencies, that goes without saying. But the question is whether there are not—President Eisenhower occasionally said that in politics everything is a matter of degree. Nothing could be truer. And all these political terms have this relativity in them—not absolutely independent, no man can be. But in the practical sense, we say that. For example, if you have children and you say at a certain moment [that] they become independent, that is not a meaningless expression: that is very clear in its meaning in the context. And the same as you say the man who lives independently of the opinion of people inferior to him, that makes sense. That makes sense. And if you say that a thoughtful beggar is more independent than a king, [that] also makes sense. He needs men infinitely less than the king needs them. Yes?

Student: If . . . you're talking about . . .your final point here that as well as the virtues of these liberal gentlemen, this aversion to exactness indicates or would seem to me to be a defect of a regime controlled by them, which would be controlled by them . . . ultimately

dominant attitudes have an aversion to exactness. And it seems to me that this leads to a kind of culture where fewer really important things get done that are new or on a large scale. I was thinking about England, and I think that one of the reasons that England has succeeded so much is because it has accepted into its—the leaders have accepted into their ranks men who are so concerned with exactness, and that these men are a good balance to those who have an aversion to it. And a society totally concerned with liberal . . . might be very dull.

LS: Yes, well, whether it is dull, is perhaps not the highest consideration. Perhaps the purpose of life is not fun.

Student: I didn't mean that at all.

LS: . . . virtue. But surely, there is no question—but still I can only say this, [11]in order show the difficulty here, what is the net result that they had a Newton in the Mint, yes, in the Royal Mint,[v] and John Locke is practically the founder of the Bank of England, and which of the famous scientists was in the House of Lords or in Parliament? John Stuart Mill was in the House of Commons, and so on and so on. Very well, what is the ultimate outcome of that?

Same Student: You mean in England, or?

LS: Ya, even in England, but generally.

Same Student: I'm not certain I follow where you are going.

LS: Well, I will put it very simply: the hydrogen bomb.

Same Student: Oh, I see. [Laughter]

LS: So in other words, that not such a simple thing. That is not—I mean, I don't say this is nonsense, but I will say that it is not such a simple thing to believe there is a perfect harmony between the amount of exactness in the sciences and the political [method]. This can raise problems of its own. You can put it this way: there are perhaps, for convenience sake, two fundamental possibilities of solving the political problem: one was the Aristotelian, which is the same as Plato and so, basically; the other is the modern one. They have something in common, surely, but they are also fundamentally different. We have become aware in various ways of certain difficulties of the most basic difficulties of the modern solution. And that is our predicament. Why do we have beatniks and this kind of thing? That is all due to the fact that part of the population, and not necessarily the most thoughtless part, doesn't have a clear way in front of itself as it had for many, many generations. We believe in progress, and we know in a very vague and general way where it leads to: to ever greater abundance, to ever greater freedom, to ever greater equality, and to ever greater culture. All good things. And then we went on, and suddenly

[v] A mint owned by the government of the United Kingdom that produces coins for dozens of countries, but primarily for the United Kingdom.

an abyss opened. And I think that was for the popular consciousness the atomic bomb, more I think than the economic crisis and some other kinds of thing. Because [in] the economic crisis someone could say: "We [will] get another expert, called Lord Keynes, and he will take care of that," you see. So. But here we have no experts: there are experts for producing atomic bombs, but there are no experts telling us what to do with Khrushchev, you see? That is the practical form of the question of the hydrogen bomb.

And therefore we try, we want to understand our situation, and I think one can say that all social scientists who are thoughtful are concerned with this very problem: What is the basic defect which has been overlooked somehow in these last three centuries? My suggestion is: only let us do it in the clearest and simplest way, by looking at the alternative proposal of equal . . . That was the master of those who know: Aristotle. That is the most convenient way of doing it. Plato's is much more complex. And then if we do that, we see that the alternative is indeed not in every respect beautiful. And the modern men who revolted against it in the sixteenth century were not fools, I mean there was something which was unattractive in Aristotle. But the question is, is it *simply* inferior, is it simply—one should really begin a course on Aristotle with chapter 46 of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, where Hobbes draws up *the* indictment against Aristotle. And many of these things are identically the same as you would find them in John Dewey, for example. So they had certain reasons, very good reasons. But the question is: Were the reasons so good as they thought they were? I think for all the attempts made by quite a few people today, I don't want to mention names, but you know there are very many people who are concerned with that, would gain in clarity if the alternative were as articulate as it is in Aristotle. If you take some documents of, say, Archbishop Laud's fear of what would come with the emancipation of the capitalists,[vi] you know, this kind of thing, that is a very narrow issue. Here it is stated in all comprehensiveness. That is the point. Yes? Good.

Now we are not where we should be regarding—so the education, we repeat, is the gentlemen's education. Now how does it look? Let us go on. What are his subjects?

Mr. Reinken:
The studies now generally established as parts of the curriculum may be regarded—[vii] (1337b23)

LS: —simply because it is also controversial while the other things are admitted. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
At present, indeed, it is mainly studied as if its object were pleasure; but the real reason which originally led to its being made a subject of education is something higher. Our very nature has a tendency (on which we have often remarked) to seek of itself for ways and means which will enable us to use leisure rightly, as well as to find some right occupation; indeed it is the power to use leisure rightly, as we would once more repeat, which is the basis of all our life. It is true— (1337b28-34)

[vi] William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Charles I.
[vii] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Aristotle tries to answer the question by returning to the nature of man; the consideration that music is pleasant would not decide the issue. This much is clear. Would not decide it. According to nature. Now this is of course a key word regarding the best regime; do not forget that in the best regime, the most important issue, namely, regarding the relation of the element of strength and the element of understanding, the military arrangement and the governing arrangement was decided entirely on grounds of nature. The same men must be both warriors and the governors, but they can't be that at the same time. Because the time you are best as a soldier, you are not so good as a governor, generally speaking, and vice versa. But nature does it, because there are the two stages: youth and maturity. And so we can even get . . . the priests, the old ones, three stages: youth, maturity, old age, a natural distinction. The basis for the distinction between the warriors, the governors, the priests, according to nature. Here again, we consider nature as our guide. Go on. We need both there. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
It is true that both occupation and leisure are necessary; but it is also true that leisure is higher than occupation, and is the end to which occupation is directed. Our problem, therefore, is to find modes of activity which will fill our leisure. We can hardly fill our leisure with play. To do so would be to make play the be-all and end-all of life. That is an impossibility. Play is a thing to be chiefly used in connection with one side of life—the side of occupation. (A simple argument shows that this is the case. Occupation is the companion of work and exertion: the worker needs relaxation: play is intended to provide relaxation.) We may therefore conclude that play and games should only be admitted into our state at the proper times and seasons, and should be applied as restoratives. The feelings which play produces in the mind are feelings of relief from exertion; and the pleasure it gives provides relaxation. Leisure is a different matter: we think of it as having in itself intrinsic pleasure, intrinsic happiness, intrinsic felicity. Happiness of that order does not belong to those who are engaged in occupation: it belongs to those who have leisure. Those who are engaged in occupation are so engaged with a view to some end which they regard as still unattained. But felicity is a present end; and all men think of it as accompanied by pleasure and not by pain. (1337b34-38a7)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now Aristotle makes there the crucial distinction, which has somehow been forgotten, between recreation and leisure. He establishes this hierarchy: the lowest is recreation; then comes business, occupations and so [LS writes on the blackboard]; and the highest is leisure. Recreation: you relax in order to work or to work better. But you work not for the sake of work, but for the sake of your leisure. That is absolutely crucial. In the ordinary discussions of leisure and leisure time, of course, these two things are identical, as you know. Yes?

Student: What of the academicians?

LS: What do you mean by academician?

Same Student: What of yourself?

LS: Well, you must know the answer according to Aristotle, if I were—no, academician is a dubious thing. [Laughter]

Student: Then the teachers.

LS: Teachers are surely men who do work, who are workers of some sort. Let us forget about me, if you don't mind. But for what you mean people like myself should stand for, that's extremely simple. Where is their place? [LS writes on the blackboard] Only here. Sure. You know what the Greek word for leisure is? Shall I write it down? *Schole.* Latinized: *schola.* English [much laughter]: school. School was supposed to be the place of leisure. That it has become the place of anguish [laughter], work, boredom and so, that is the fate of almost all human things, you know? [Laughter] But that was—that is a very pertinent question, I mean, that you put it in slightly insulting personal form only gave it more character.

So this, relaxation, is what Aristotle calls play. Play. And it is also rather in common to the same as what is now what is frequently called fun. Fun. But fun and leisure are two entirely different things. Aristotle gives some examples of such recreating things which are fun and rich in fun, and yet have nothing to do with leisure. For example, there is one recreating activity which we all indulge [in] from time to time, I am sure, and that is sleep, as Aristotle mentions later. But a man who would work in order to sleep would be a rather peverse human being. Another example which Aristotle gives is getting drunk. That, as you know from the literature, I am sure [laughter], that can also contribute to relaxation. But the man who would work in order to get drunk from time to time, as the end, would also be a very strange fellow. So recreation is fun. Business is this pain. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Pain, and effort, and annoyances. Recreation is incompatible with annoyance. But business is unthinkable without annoyance, and leisure is also without annoyance. I'll quasi-translate "pain by annoyance" to make it . . . because I am aware that there are quite a few businesses which are not accompanied by bodily pain, but there are annoyances . . .

Now in order to understand the distinction, Aristotle's distinction, I would like to use a simple suggestion made by a German writer, Pieper,[viii] who wrote a very interesting book on the subject of leisure. Now what was the traditional name for leisure time? I mean, traditionally in the Western world. Do you know that word? Now how do our days, how do our days and weeks pass? We work in the day, I suppose, sleep in the night. Or have recreation after the *dopo lavoro*. And then what is the institutional form of that which is neither work nor recreation? How was it called?

Student: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . .

[viii] Josef Pieper, *Leisure, The Basis of Culture* (1948).

LS: Yes, you see, we work on certain days which we call the working days and also week days. And then there are other days—now what is the traditional word for that?

Student: It's called holidays.

LS: Holidays. That gives us very good help with understanding of what Aristotle means. Holidays. That is neither work nor mere recreation; it is the dedication to something which is the end of it. Aristotle did not say that, as I long to tell you in advance, but this gives all of us an idea, and therefore one can say, which was said by Pieper, that the problem of the leisure time is simply the problem of the obsolescence, disappearance of the holidays as holidays. I mean, not holidays in the sense where it stands for vacation, i.e., for recreation, but in the original meaning, holy days.

Now let us go on. We come very soon to the crucial passage, where we left off. Ya, everyone of us all believe, and when *all* believe it, literally all, then it is not a mere accident, then it has some ground. For example, we all believe that the sun turns around the earth. This terrible crime which men committed until Copernicus came, that was of course not an accidental folly. Not an accidental folly. That has some truth in fact: we still see it every day. And that has to be corrected on the basis of very complicated considerations, that's also true, but that everyone in his sound mind sees it every day is also important, and for practical terrestrial purposes, terribly important. So everyone says the felicity, the bliss, the happy state is accompanied by leisure. That, all admit. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
It is true that all are not equally agreed about the nature of the pleasure which accompanies felicity. Different persons estimate its nature differently, according to their own personality— (1338a7-9)

LS: Personality. "Personality" doesn't exist. "According to themselves and according to their habit." Ya? That shouldn't happen. Yes, and now on the next point?

Mr. Rankin:
But the highest pleasure, derived from the noblest sources, will be that of the man of greatest virtue.[ix] (1338a8-9)

LS: You see again, the great variety, infinite variety, but no relativism because of the hierarchy. Yes. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
It is clear therefore that there are some branches of learning and education which ought to be studied with a view to the proper use of leisure in the cultivation of the mind. It is clear, too, that these studies should be regarded as ends in themselves, while studies pursued with a view to an occupation should be regarded merely as means and matters of necessity. This will explain why our forefathers made music a part of education. They did

[ix] In Barker: "of greatest goodness"

not do so because it was necessary: it is nothing of the sort. Nor did they do so because it is useful, as some other subjects are. Reading and writing, for example, are useful in various ways—for money-making; for housekeeping; for the acquisition of knowledge; and for a number of political activities. Drawing may be held to be useful in helping men to judge more correctly the works of different artists. (1338a9-19)

LS: Artisans—no difference. Carpenters, for example. Surely.

Mr. Reinken:
Nor is it, like physical training, useful in improving health and military prowess: it has no visible effect upon either. We are thus left with its value for the cultivation of the mind in leisure. This is evidently the reason of its being introduced into education: it ranks as a part of the cultivation which men think proper to freemen. This is the meaning of the lines in Homer, beginning,

Such are they who alone should be called to the bountiful banquet,
and continuing (after a mention of various guests with the words),
With them call they a minstrel, to pleasure all men with his music.

Again, in another passage, Odysseus is made to say that music is the best of pastimes when men are all merry, and

They who feast in the hall lend their ears to the minstrel in silence,
Sitting in order due. (1338a19-31)

LS: Well, let us stop here. Incidentally, Barker shouldn't say "Odysseus is made to say": "Odysseus says," just as Homer says "Odysseus says." That is not uninteresting for the question of how Aristotle read Homer; and since he may have read him better than we did, it may be of some help for understanding Homer himself. But let us now come to the main point. Here we have the answer to the question, not to the question as to what gentlemen's education is, but the more specific question: the relation of music to gentlemen's education. The gentleman must have the liberal studies necessary, only in a subordinate manner. Liberal studies are such studies as enable him to spend his leisure appropriately, i.e., nobly. But what is that activity? How does the gentleman spend his leisure? Here we have the answer. What does he do? What does he do? He listens to the singer. The singer, ya, the poet. I make one addition which is not stated here but which I take for granted: Aristotle implies [that] he listens to the singer with understanding. Now if the leisure activity is the end of man, then the end of the gentleman's life is to listen to the poets. That is the end. Some of you, we have seen the corresponding statement at the end of the *Ethics* which is more, in many ways a more comprehensive work than the *Politics* is. What does he say there as to the end for the sake of which all business—the same argument, fundamentally, there: recreation for the sake of business, business for the sake of leisure; leisure has two ends. What is the true end according to the *Ethics*?

Student: Virtue.

LS: Pardon?

Student: Virtue.

LS: No. Ya, virtue, but a certain kind of virtue.

Student: Contemplation.

LS: Contemplation, ya. Understanding. Contemplation. The gentlemen does it in his way, and therefore not in the highest way. That is in a sense the end of the gentlemen's life, to sit there—look at Odysseus, who in a way was a gentleman: he did these amazing deeds, met with great anguish and annoyance, you know, when he was with these Cyclops and Calypso, and Circe also was not exactly unmitigated bliss, and to say nothing of the other adventures which he had. But why did he do that? Ultimately, in order to listen to the singers when he comes to the Phaeacians, you remember? When the minstrel comes he . . . from this connection. That's his activity. If you would say, what would be the present-day equivalent? I think you must have heard of people who, very active and successful businessmen, who still do all [of] what they do ultimately for the sake of culture. You must have heard that. And what does that culture mean? I mean, I know there are also others who would say they do it in order to become philanthropists; that's another way which Aristotle also considers, but that is one answer of very great importance. But what do they mean by culture?

Mr. Reinken: May I offer a respectable example?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Einstein said about ten years before he died: "What does it mean to die? It means that we will no longer be able to listen to Mozart."

LS: Ya, that would be an example. Einstein is not the best example because he was more a scientist than a gentleman in this sense. [Laughter] I don't deny that he was—but I mean, he is not such a clear example of a gentleman as, say, Colonel Blimp [laughter], Colonel Blimp, the famous British figure.[x] Have you never seen that? Really a wonderful character. Good. That is so, that is one answer, that—here you see the difference very clearly, in understanding and poetry. Music is practically always separate from speech, so you could perhaps better say poetry, that is obviously different from business, that's clear. It is also different from mere recreation, like a swimming pool, because it is really a proper occupation of the mind. Yes?

Student: I'm bothered by the fact that artists themselves pay so much attention to exactness and go through annoyance and prevail . . . art, and yet properly speaking, I am not sure that you can say they are doing it for any other end than for creativity itself; maybe I am wrong, but—

---

[x] Created by cartoonist David Low in 1934.

LS: Yes, but what does creativity mean? Let us not go into this question and simply say you mean the production of such songs is more than . . . Do you mean that?

Student: Well, I thought the crucial fact was that there wasn't another end for which . . .

LS: The gentleman. Let us consider for one moment Odysseus, a beautiful example. Odysseus listens to the singers with the Phaeacians, and then what does he do afterward? He himself sings. Singing [12]describes worthwhile things in a worthwhile manner. So Odysseus is both a listener and what you call a creator. Ya, but the creator as such—I mean, what is a poet, in other words, from Aristotle's or from the Greek point of view? He is not a gentleman, not in the sense that he is a crook or villain or whatever have you, but he is higher than a gentleman: he is a wise man. And that is a complicated question. What is the relation of the wisdom which the poets have to the wisdom of philosophers and other men? But there is clearly an enormous difference between the man who writes Homeric poems and the man who recites Homeric poems; and they were generally regarded as very stupid asses, the rhapsodes. There is a Platonic dialogue called the *Ion*, in which Socrates has a conversation with such a fellow, and he is presented as a very vain and stupid man. That is something entirely different. The poets and their status is not discussed here. But that is implied, one can safely say that.

Student: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: Well, for instance, they talk about the simple workmen who lavished all their time . . . devotion on the great cathedrals of Europe, and fierce attention to exactness, an activity which no other end than itself, I think, really because it is religious, and yet you can't quite call it leisure.

LS: Work—

Student: . . . work in the sense of a holy, an exercise of—

LS: That is a subject not discussed by Aristotle here, we have to say . . . he will take that up later, and that is, we don't have the time for that any more. Aristotle in the sequel [13]goes into—but we must not forget this very important passage which we read. He takes up later on the purpose of musical education. Up to now he has said: What is music for? What is its place in the life of the average human being, of the average gentlemen? And later on he raises the question: What is the purpose of music in education? And in this connection, the moral education, the moral element is emphasized, namely, that the right kind of music makes us better men, makes a man a gentleman. But the question which he has raised here: What is a gentlemen who [14]is no longer in need to be made into a gentlemen, what does he do with music? —that is one, and the other question is: What does music do in order to *form* gentlemen originally, i.e., what is the purpose of musical education? And there the emphasis is of course most strongly on moral education, and

that plays a very great role in the sequel. We read only one brief passage in 1340a, shortly after the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
Perhaps there is more in question than our sharing in the common pleasure which all men derive from music—a pleasure, indeed, which is natural and instinctive, and which explains why the use of music appeals to all ages and all types of character—and perhaps we ought to consider whether music has not also some sort of bearing on our characters and our souls. It will clearly have such a bearing if our characters are actually affected by music. That they are so affected is evident from the influence exercised by a number of different tunes, but especially by those of Olympus. His tunes, by general consent, have an inspiring effect on the soul; and a feeling of inspiration is an affection of the soul's character. We may add that, in listening to mere imitative sounds, where there is no question of time or tune, all men are moved to feelings of sympathy. (1339b43-40a14)

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. [15]Music does two things: it makes us (how do you say?) inspired. Ya, inspired, and it makes us imitative of characters. Imitative of characters. The latter is clear. For example, say, a marshal song, marshal modes arouse, make us to that extent have marshal feelings, and therefore contribute to our education in courage and so on. Others make us tame, in a good sense, make us gentle, and therefore contribute to our education. What is this inspiration? Now the Greek work is enthusiasm. Enthusiasm. But that must be understood: we must consider its original meaning. It means inspired by god, possessed by a god, and therefore derivatively inspired. That is something different from the moral education, and here is where the problem of what you meant, namely, religion, comes in, only in this form. And in this connection Aristotle speaks later on of tragedy. Tragedy has very much to do with this, not with the formation of character but with creating this enthusiasm inspired by a god. But what is meant by that in Aristotle? Very generally speaking, Aristotle makes another distinction later between music and other things which teach us, of course, moral . . . that's one. And then there are forms of music which excite, inspire us in this religious way, as we would say. Their function is not teaching but purification, purging. And you know the famous definition of the tragedy by Aristotle, that it is a form of purging of our souls. This is Aristotle's answer to this question, whether it is sufficient is of course an entirely different question.

Now this passage which Mr. Agria—there are only two more points which I would like [to make]—yes, that is very long. It is very difficult. Aristotle is very brief on these matters, and without an analysis of his *Poetics* and especially his analysis of tragedy, this is almost . . . but the main point, however . . . function of music, which is partly moral, and partly cathartic. Cathartic is something different from moral. In a way, the cathartic is more elementary, more basic than the moral. The cathartic has the function of [16]liberating us from fundamental obstacles to serene morality, whereas the moral education is directed immediately towards this moral sentiment.

One thing I say is a function of music in education, and another, and in a way a more important question: What is the function of music in the life of the already educated or

mature gentleman? And [to] that question, that first question, we have seen Aristotle's answer. This passage, which we briefly discussed, in 1341a26 following, about the history of the flute, is very interesting; and you see what some people think is historical understanding is the product of the nineteenth century and so, is sheer nonsense. Aristotle says . . . what happened: the Greeks won the Persian war. They won it. They defeated the greatest power of which they knew,[xi] the Persian Empire, and then they became more courageous, more self-confident than they were before. Out of that grew ultimately that glory of the intellectual development of Athens. This simple historical observation was as much within the reach of Aristotle as of any modern historian, that goes without staying. That is only in passing.

The last point which I would like to mention is a reference in 1342a, I wish I could read that. I would like to know how Barker translates that; at any rate that is unimportant. There is a passage here, there is an expression of Aristotle: the natural, the excess according to nature. In 1342a23. I will find it for you.

Mr. Reinken:
just as the souls of its members are distorted from their natural state— (1342a22-23)

LS: Ya, the natural state. That is also the way in which the medieval translation translates it, but literally translated: "from the habit," from the condition according to nature. But let us say the natural state, the state of nature. That is the origin of this famous term. Now the state of nature means here of course the state according to nature: the normal, healthy, good state. If you are sick in one way or the other, you are not in your natural state. For example, if you can't walk, your feet are not in a natural state; or if you can't see, your eyes are not in the natural state. That's the original meaning of state of nature. The state of nature of man is of course the state of which man is under the best conditions; and since man is a political animal, man is in a state of nature if he is a citizen of a good society. If he is a citizen of a bad society, he is not quite in the state of nature. Now here you see the enormous change which has taken place in modern times, where the term "state of nature" became so crucial and so much more emphatically used as it is in Aristotle. That the state of nature is the most primitive state, the most primitive state; and one could very well, by contrasting the meaning of state of nature, say, in Hobbes, with the meaning of state of nature in Aristotle, develop the whole problem of the ancients and the moderns, of classical political thought and modern political thought, and therefore that would be only a more technical and seemingly more abstruse formulation of the problem of the H-bomb. I don't have to explain it any more, yes? Good.

Now there was one point I wanted to make in connection to a remark Mr. Brown made on an earlier occasion, but he is not here, and you would be not much very interested in that. Therefore I will omit that and ask you whether there are any questions which you would like to bring up in the few minutes we still can be doing this. Mr. Flaumenhaft ?

[xi] Strauss raps on the table for emphasis.

Student: . . . we keep getting back to the point that crucial difference between the moderns and the ancients is that the moderns somehow the . . . natural or the important the important thing is . . . in the efficient cause, what's prior or received . . .

LS: Yes, you could say that.

Student: And it seems that much of the change is due just the abandonment of a sense of purpose in nature. It would seem to me if you accept this, much of what follows from Aristotle's acceptance of an end in nature isn't really tenable for modern man. It isn't a matter of overlooking things and not deriving insights from the ancients, but a fundamentally different way of looking at the world in general.

LS: Ya, but still, does not your responsibility ultimately extend to the basic premises which you accept? I mean, can you ultimately as a thinking man pass the buck, and can say Galileo did it? No, you must do it somehow. I mean, it's very hard, very hard. But still, if you want to have any say in such matters, you much face that responsibility. Do you see that?

Same Student: Well, it seems to me, to come back to the—inherently you have to accept responsibility for your choice of first principles for your basis, but it seems to me that if you start with the basis which essentially denies that in the universe, independent of the will of man, there's a purpose, things have a place, the world is not really a desert, this a whole series of . . .

LS: Yes, but which—we cannot go into that question of course now, but may I suggest two lines of approach. The first is that it is not true that all premodern thought was in the Aristotelian sense teleological. When Plato presented his notion of the universe in the *Timaeus*, that's greatly different from that of Aristotle. It is also theoretical, but in a different way, much more mathematical for some reasons. But something else: when modern science emerged in the seventeenth century, the common name for that was the corpuscular doctrine, corpuscular—in Bacon, for example, and later, Leibniz and so. Corpuscular, atomistic doctrine. There were such nonteleological doctrines in classical antiquity. So that is a difference between modern thought and Aristotelian thought, and perhaps even Socratic thought, but not between modern thought and ancient thought. Number one.

Number two, and here I come to something which is not as much a question of historical learning as the first question, and that is this. Modern natural science was developed primarily as a doctrine of inanimate beings, the heavenly bodies as well as of terrestrial bodies, which are inanimate beings. Think of the crucial Galilean and Newtonian discoveries and laws. Good? And now this doctrine of the inanimate bodies was meant to be—at least that is the most simple assumption—*the* basis of an account of everything. Everything, in particular of that thing commonly called the soul. You know? There were great difficulties, very great difficulties, and if you read the most intelligent materialist in modern times, Thomas Hobbes, there you would have the absolute impression that it is absolutely hopeless to solve it. Then there came somewhat more ingenious men than

Hobbes, for example, Spinoza, and [they] tried to solve it. They developed a certain psychology, I cannot go into that. Today the whole thing in a way abandoned. If you take the extreme forms of psychology, say, behaviorism, you study in all cases behavior; the distinction of body and soul never arises . . . Well, in brief, the modern science is burdened with what I believe [is] the absolutely hopeless problem, to give an account in its turn of the human soul and his actions and his motions. The Aristotelian natural science is open to very great difficulties, and no one in his senses could say it can be restored as he stated it, although it is perhaps not as easy to refute as people sometimes think, even as he stated it. But Aristotle's natural science has one very great advantage, and in this respect it is still absolutely superior to anything you find in modern science, and that is that it begins not with inanimate bodies but with the soul. You can say Aristotle suffers defeat because he thinks the understanding of the soul gives him a key to the understanding of inanimate bodies. That may be so. You know the famous story: the stone falls because it tends. That may have been entirely wrong, for all I know. But on the other hand, we have legitimately a perhaps greater interest in understanding the soul than in understanding the fall of bodies. Although you must also be concerned with . . . I don't deny that, you know that. Therefore the thing is not as simple as that. The question is—when you say final causes, then of course everyone's back is up against that terrible thing, but when someone would speak of inclinations and tendencies and so, that doesn't sound *so* terrible, and that is still relative. When you use such a simple word as growth, you mean a movement from, to, in the sense of a perfection: it grows *to* something. That is a simple obvious phenomenon, a puppy becoming a grown-up dog and anything of this kind, from which Aristotle starts. And he contends by implication [that] you can never understand that if you compare that to the fall of a body, that's something entirely different.

How to reconcile that, that is of course is a very great question, and only a man who would be a genius equal to Aristotle could even hit on a conceit, on a notion which would give us a . . . But on the other hand, no one can sensibly expect of us that because of the tremendous things done in the exact natural sciences, the only way of understanding human things must be one way modeled on the way of exact natural sciences. That is a wholly unwarranted although, prior to investigation, plausible assumption. How plausible it is, you see that—everyone falls for this notion at least once in his life, when he says: Natural science makes this tremendous progress by the use of these methods. Well, why don't you do the same thing in the social sciences? You must have heard this *n* times. And yet while it is plausible, on inspection it proves to be very, very questionable. I think that's the issue. And even, for example, from time to time, I talk to people who know these things infinitely better than I do, psychologists and so, but what is really proven are things unknown to the ancients or at least not mentioned anywhere, and of any importance is very, very little. I mean, for example, if one knows now a bit more that the baby begins to have the so-called social smile, well, that finds a very easy place in any psychology. Or if one can perhaps give a somewhat better account of flicks of the tongue—if it is a better account, if it is a better account than Aristotle gave, who doesn't mention it. Or of dreams, which he did discuss perhaps, but that does not necessarily mean that the whole context in which these modern observations are made is a sound one. You know? I mean, one must really keep one's head and make a distinction without

which I think one will not be able to understand anything; that the human things are not intelligible in these terms. I mean, read any of these scientific studies of human things and see whether they enlighten you. They may contain certain factual observations which are interesting, surely, but they could have been made by any intelligent man on the basis of any metaphysics if he had looked at that. They have nothing to do with this particular methodology.

The example of Mr. Brown concerns something, I will mention this now. The question was Aristotle's analysis of the tyrant. And Aristotle says something about what moves the tyrant: in present-day lingo, the motivations of the tyrant. And you know Aristotle has simple fairy tale-like stories: he is a man who loves wealth and power. And well of course one could say, the first objection one would make: Well, Stalin and Lenin probably meant something more than that they are rich and powerful; they stood for a cause, if anything. Of course that must be considered, and I gave some indications to that, the question of so-called ideologies, which are in the strict sense absent from ancient thought. But Mr. Brown meant something else. He meant such things as sadism. Sadism. For example, someone like Hitler: what motivated him was ultimately not a certain theory about the master race and the Jews as the enemy of the master race—you know this kind of thing—nor was it his desire to eat ten steaks a day and other things of this nature, or to be powerful for its own sake, but sadism. Sadism. Ya, that is a so-called psychological explanation, and some people think: Oh, where do you find any reference to such delicate things as sadism in Aristotle? Now all right, let us consider that for a moment. What is a sadist? I suppose it means a man who derives pleasure from inflicting pain on other people without any regard to his own advantage. In other words, he is not merely a ruthless man, a ruthless man who pursues an advantage at all costs, but there was a simple language not taken from (how do you call that?) psychopathology, sexual-psychopathology, and so on, but from ordinary life there is a word for that: cruel. A cruel man. A cruel man who, as a cruel man, is not only ruthless but derives pleasure from inflicting pain on other people. Now this is a phenomenon which exists. And then we have . . . here with a psychological explanation, that this cruel conduct is rooted in a sexual perversion—that's a theory . . . but that of course is a question: Is this theory true? Could it not be that even the sexual perversions stem from a more fundamental perversion? Applied to Hitler, whether Hitler was sexually perverted or not I believe has not been shown by social scientists. I have not read that. So it would be a mere hypothesis that his cruelty could be explained by sexual perversion. But even granting that, how do we know that these kind[s] of sexual perversions are not themselves the consequences of a more fundamental perversion which also extends to things? This question is just pushed by scientists: of course sexual perversions are more fundamental than any others. How do we know that? This kind of psychology, this particular kind of psychology, dismisses this question.

Now how could this be understood? There is—again, starting from the surface, there is something wrong with a sadist. That is in common to the psychological explanation question and what, for example, Aristotle would say. Something wrong with him. Sure, but what does this mean? The normal thing, the not-wrong thing, is that one does not derive pleasure from inflicting pain on others for its own sake. Then, if this is the normal

thing, it becomes a necessary question: What defect, what suffering, or if you want to talk Greek, what trauma induces a man to derive pleasure from inflicting pain on others? That would be a question. But we would again have to make a distinction between three phenomenally very different things: inflicting pain on all others, or on some others, or on a single other. These are obviously very different cases.

Now if we take one case which is very simple, and where reference to this kind of psychology would be absurd, namely, the case of revenge. Someone killed X's father. X wants to hit back. It is not sufficient for him somehow that the law does it, he must do it. But this kind of revenge cannot possibly suffice as an explanation if the objects of that sadism are all of us, *die Menchen*. We could legitimately speak of revenge if the object of sadistic action is some or some—[if the object] is one man or some men; some men may be a whole nation, of course, but all? How can this be understood? How can we understand a man who hates all other men? The ancients knew that: there was Timon of Athens. There was a very word, *misanthropos*, a man who hates other human beings. But I think we have today a special reason for that; I think this phenomenon has probably changed as a phenomenon, namely, by virtue of the personification of society with a capital S. There are people who hate society. I do not believe that this phenomenon was possible—[xii]

---

[1] Deleted "What"
[2] Deleted "is the fact"
[3] Deleted "historical"
[4] Deleted "there is no"
[5] Deleted "you also"
[6] Deleted "is it—must we not also"
[7] Deleted "professional"
[8] Deleted "where does—I mean, the fact that"
[9] Deleted "he is"
[10] Deleted "is of course"
[11] Deleted "what is the"
[12] Deleted "I mean, you know"
[13] Deleted "I would like to mention only this point, in the sequel, he"
[14] Deleted "who does no longer to"
[15] Deleted "there are two—in other words"
[16] Deleted "getting"

[xii] The tape ends here.